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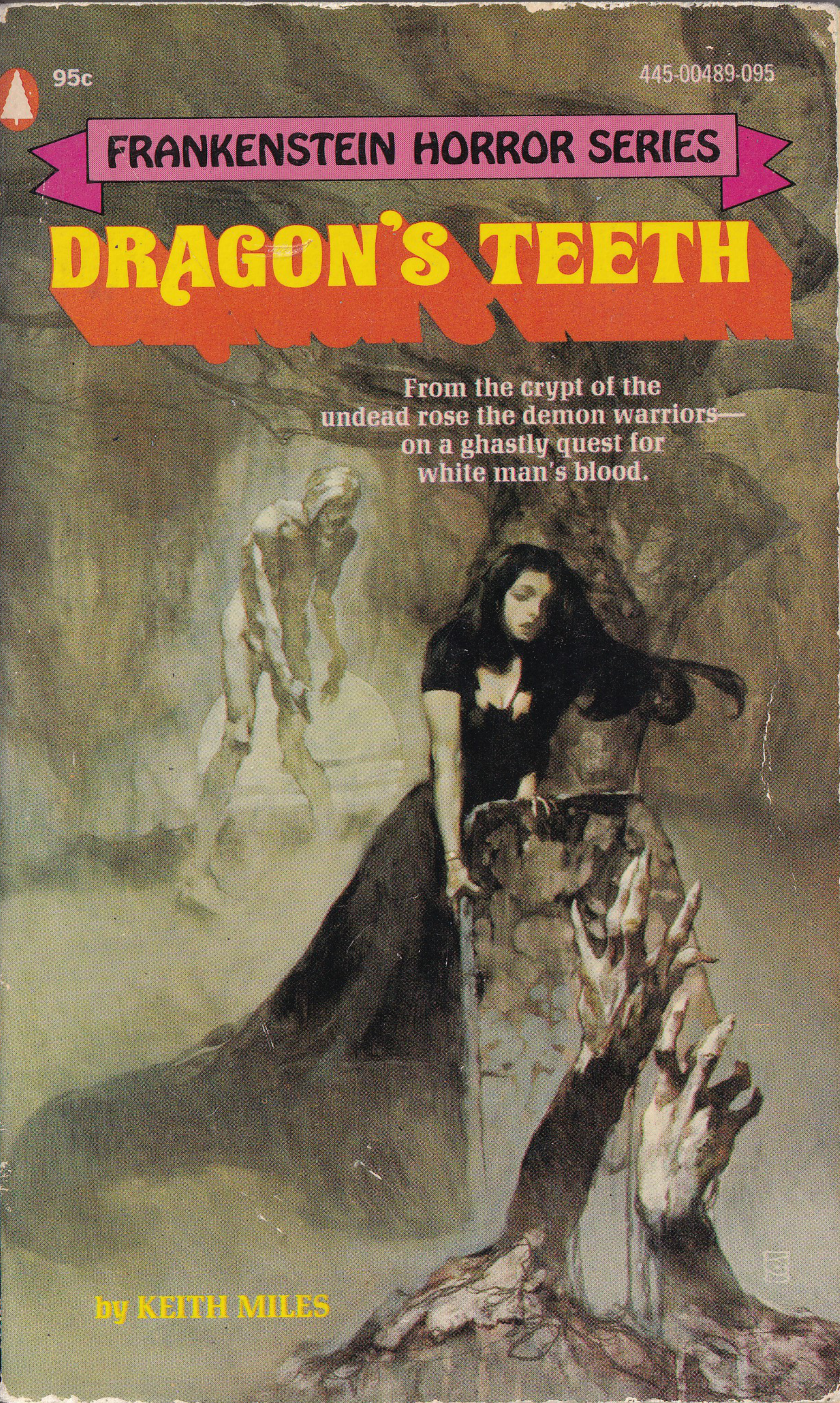
FRANKENSTEIN HORROR SERIES

DRAGON'S TEETH



From the crypt of the undead rose the demon warriors—on a ghastly quest for white man's blood.

by KEITH MILES

THE EMPTY GRAVES OF CHITIMACHA

Adam was totally helpless, unable to move or speak. He watched the eerie scene as though it were but a dream. He saw the mound nearest him begin to move as if some great creature which had been buried under it was now awakening and trying to burrow its way to the surface. Suddenly a hand emerged and clawed the air.

This can't be happening—but he knew then it was true, as the unearthly body pushed through the ancient earth and stood above him, gleaming with hideous power . . .

DRAGON'S TEETH

by KEITH MILES

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One

Julie Chambers sat up in bed and peered at the luminous dial of her watch. It was ten past one and for some inexplicable reason, in spite of the physical exhaustion of having worked the entire day at the archaeological digs, unearthing the ancient Indian burial mounds which had been recently discovered in the eerie wilderness of the Bayou LaFourche in Louisiana, she could not sleep.

There was something unearthly about being there alone in her camper which had been mounted on the chassis of a pickup truck, and though she had securely locked herself in after Dr. Phillips had returned to his tent, she was becoming more distressed by the minute. From beyond the screened windows on either side of her bed she could see the inky blackness—and could hear the eternal night sounds of the cicada and the bleeping of frogs and the strange nocturnal cries of other wild creatures. But this did not bother her. She was quite unafraid and accustomed to that. She was used to being alone in the wild country. During the past six years in which she had been an associate professor at the university's department of archaeology, Julie had spent almost four of those years working in the desolate countryside in both North and South America, usually living in her mobile camper which she drove to the sites by herself or in the company of others attached to the archaeology department.

Most of the time she had gone it alone, exploring burial mounds and ruins of ancient civilizations in search of artifacts and clues to the histories of those long-dead peoples, so she was not at all the type who frightened easily and never once had been afraid like this.

Now, however, it was something different—unexplainable—strange—evil. It was a kind of clawing sensation that set her teeth on edge and prickled the hair at the nape of her neck. She had felt this way ever since the afternoon three days before when she met the voodoo woman.

That day, as Julie drove her camper into the swamp along an ill-defined trail the professor had carefully mapped for her, she happened upon a black woman who had been walking in the bayou. Although Julie was certain that she was on the right trail, she was overwhelmed by a strong sense of curiosity about the woman and wondered why she was trudging along way out there so far from the nearest settlement, with a bundle on her head. When she stopped the vehicle and climbed down, the woman halted and turned to face her. She was obviously annoyed to see Julie calling to her. "Pardon me, Miss," Julie smiled. "Can you tell me please if this trail leads to the place where they found that ancient Indian burial mound?"

The woman contemplated Julie for several moments before replying: "*Oui, demoiselle.* Why you want go there?"

The woman was a Cajun and she was just as curious about Julie as Julie was about her. "I'm a professor of archaeology with the university and I'm on my way there to study and catalogue the ruins. It's purely scientific, you know."

"Why you do that?" came the reply. The woman's round face was devoid of emotion or expression. Her eyes, however, were disapproving, almost hostile.

"Because it is my job," Julie said. "We study ancient ruins in an effort to understand ancient and primitive man with a view to piecing together something of their history and culture, things like that."

"You're the fool, I reckon," she said.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," Julie said. "Why am I a fool?"

The woman shrugged and started to resume her walk. Julie ran over to her and drew up alongside. "No, wait. Please, I'd appreciate it if you'd explain. Perhaps I could offer you a lift? A glass of iced tea. I've some in the camper in a thermos."

The woman stopped again and nodded. "Okay. I walk ten mile awready and it wearisome."

Julie smiled and led her back to the camper. She opened the door on the passenger side and helped her climb up to the seat and then settle herself with her parcel. Then she opened the ice chest under the dashboard and removed a jug of iced tea. She poured into paper cups and they drank in silence. "It is cool and sweet," the woman said, smiling for the first time.

Julie nodded and went around to the driver's seat and climbed in. She started the engine and asked, "How far are you going?"

"Two miles yet I go."

"I didn't know anyone lived here in the bayou."

"We do not live here," the woman said. "I walk ten mile to see cemetery where my mother is buried."

Julie put the camper into gear and began the tedious bumpy journey along the narrow trail. On either side sawgrass and swampwater threatened to inundate what little there was of the narrow trail. Beyond the steamy bog were great trees stretching leafless dead arm branches skyward, the gray garlands of Spanish moss dangling like dead wreaths from them in the humid still air.

After a few minutes Julie asked her again, "Why did you say I am a fool?"

The woman turned to contemplate her. It seemed that she was deep in thought for several moments, deliberating whether or not to answer. At last she replied: "It is a place of the dead. It is evil place where the *un*dead do not want be disturb."

"It is a taboo place?" Julie asked patronizingly.

"*Oui.* I want get off here."

Julie stopped and leaned to open the door. The woman started to get down and paused. She smiled at Julie, but without amusement. "I am Mamaloi. I go now to offer *manger-morts* to my dead mother and I say this to you, white woman: wait for me and we will get out of this evil place. But go there and the evil ones will arise and there will be death."

"Thank you, Mamaloi," Julie said a little uneasily. "I appreciate your advice but I really must go."

The woman pulled her bundle out and then closed the door. She put it back upon her head and clucked her tongue. "I ain't going ask you no more, *me.* Taboo place of the dead is evil and you no must go there."

"I must go there," Julie said, her voice now edged with anxiety. The woman was deadly serious and this disturbed her.

The woman paused and removed one of her hands from the bundle on her head. She reached inside a pocket and removed a small sachet of colorful cloth. She handed it to Julie through the open window. "You all the time wear this. I don't got but no other amulets to keep away evil dead souls but you will need more than me."

"Well, thank you," Julie said, accepting it. The sacket bag smelled strongly of aromatic herbs and garlic. She put it into the breast pocket of the chino cloth shirt she was wearing and then reached into her slacks pocket and withdrew several dollar bills. "Here, this is for you."

The woman looked at the money but did not reach for it. "I am poor Cajun woman but I do not take charity."

"It is not charity," Julie said. "Next time you visit your mother's grave, buy her some flowers. It will be my *manger-morts.*" Julie understood enough of the voodoo religious practices to know that offerings to the dead were never refused and were greatly appreciated.

Under these conditions, the woman smiled and accepted the money. Then she turned and trudged through a stand of scrubby trees and wild foliage and vanished in the shadows of the bayou beyond.

Julie understood then, at that moment, *why* the ancient Indian burial mounds had gone undiscovered until only a few days before Dr. Phillips arrived at the site and then sent for her. The superstitious natives and their taboos had kept it a secret for some years—perhaps even several centuries—perhaps even back to the days when Louisiana was under French rule and pirates like LaFitte were lurking in those parts. She knew enough about the Cajun folklore to realize that there really was something *more* to their taboos than met the eye. She fingered the sachet bag through the cloth of her shirt pocket and then put the truck into gear and resumed her southward journey.

Over and over the Cajun woman's words: "Go there and the evil ones will arise and there will be death," kept echoing in Julie's mind. She had been exposed to native superstitions before, in the Southwest during the months she had worked the digs around the pueblos, and in Central America when she had unearthed the ancient Mayan temple and the crypts and mounds beyond it in the jungles; and before that, she had put up with the native superstitions of the Peruvian Indians who had tried to frighten her away from the ancient Aztec ruins with their taboos and superstitions, but she had never before been afraid like she was now.

Suddenly, as Julie was thinking about this and wondering why she was now so frightened, a strange throbbing sound began to permeate the still air around her. It sounded like a tom-tom beginning weakly, erratically beating like a heart coming alive. But that was ridiculous, she tried to tell herself. There weren't any tom-toms within miles. During her arduous drive some fifteen miles south of where she had dropped off the Cajun woman a dozen miles south and west of the settlement of Cut Off in the bayou, she had finally located Dr. Phillips and the other professors from the carbon dating laboratory and the anthropology department. They were the only human beings within miles. When she had reached the site they waved to her and ran over excitedly to tell her that this find was undoubtedly the most important they had yet unearthed. It measured some one hundred fifty feet square and rose up forty feet above the ground. It was much like many other mounds they had excavated, but there were certain things which made it unlike any they had ever explored before.

Julie listened for the tom-tom, trying to fix the direction of its source, but that was futile. It seemed to be coming from everywhere all at once. She didn't know what to make of it. Then, as the sound grew louder and more distinct, she had the strangest feeling that the drumming was emanating from the very depths of the burial mound which was some fifty yards from where she had parked her camper beside the three tents belonging to Dr. Phillips and the other two men.

She got out of bed, slipped on her shirt and buttoned it and then put on her slacks and sneakers. As she moved to the door, picking up her flashlight, she was aware of the sachet amulet in her breast pocket. For some reason unknown to her she felt protected because of it and the acrid smell filled her nostrils when she bent her head slightly after unlocking the door and stepping outside in the moonless night.

A light was on in the tent adjacent to Dr. Phillips'. She went toward it, walking gingerly. Only a few minutes before the drumming had so suddenly begun there had been no light inside. But now others were wondering about the drumming and perhaps were able to offer some explanation.

When Julie reached the tent she found Roy Gonzalez and George Ferguson the two professors who had accompanied Dr. Phillips to the site, in a state of consternation. They were wringing their hands and peering out of the tent with frightened expressions on their faces. When they saw Julie approaching, they tried to conceal their degree of worry and pretended to nonchalance.

"That drumming," Julie said, "where's it coming from?"

"We have no idea," Gonzalez said. He glanced at Ferguson and then toward the blackish night-shrouded mound a few yards north of where they had pitched their tents. In the darkness the mound seemed ominous, gargantuan, almost terrifying to behold.

Julie stood a moment looking warily at the mound. Then she realized Dr. Phillips was not there. She frowned and inquired, "Where's Adam?"

"I think he went back into the mound. He couldn't wait until morning to explore the tunnel we unearthed this afternoon," Gonzales said.

"I tried to stop him," Ferguson added with a gesture of helplessness, "but he wouldn't hear of it. Said he'd been waiting all his life to make a find like this and sleep was impossible."

"He should've waited until we were able to set up the cameras," Julie said. "But," she paused and sighed, "I suppose he knows enough after thirty years of this sort of thing not to disturb anything."

The others laughed drily. The drumming of the hidden tom-tom was still pervading the air, its slow incessant throbbing pulsating so vibrantly they could actually feel it oscillating against their eardrums and flesh. Julie shivered and looked around in the gloom. The tom-tom seemed more distinct as if it was actually coming from beneath the mound. The moment she realized this she turned the beam of her flashlight toward it. The stakes they had so painstakingly placed in the earth to mark off the area for measurement and mapping could be seen in the light like miniature telephone poles in perspective leading toward the excavation at the foot of the mound and the concealed tunnel entrance they had unearthed beyond it. The archaeologists had decided not to enter the tunnel until they had readied their camera and scientific equipment in order that they might precisely record everything found inside. Such tunnels were usually found in Mayan temple ruins or in the rubble of other lost civilizations and it was highly unusual to find such a tunnel in an American Indian burial mound. For this reason the team had decided to proceed slowly and cautiously because they wanted to explore everything methodically, studying the positions the artifacts and possible skeletons were discovered in. Another most curious thing about the mound was its location. It was highly unusual to find a hidden burial mound of such proportions in bayou country where there was always the threat of inundation during hurricanes or times of flood.

The day following her arrival, Julie had climbed to the top of the mound and after having photographed the surrounding swampland, noticed what seemed to be a series of cleverly arranged canals which provided drainage and which also seemed to have been responsible for having preserved the mound from the elements for so many centuries. Dr. Phillips and the others were not convinced of this theory. It seemed hardly likely that ancient primitive Indians would have such technical ability to design and build a canal system to preserve the mound. Despite their emphatic denials of her plausible theory, Julie remained convinced that she was right. As the result of this disagreement, Dr. Phillips and the others, the doctors Ferguson and Gonzalez, had proceeded with their work without reporting all their findings to Julie. She was a woman, and regardless of her expertise and long years of experience and her reputation in the field of archaeology, they were envious of her and as a consequence, were apt to pooh-pooh any theory she might have to proffer.

This did not disturb Julie. She was used to this sort of thing and stepping on male egos was something she had no compunctions about doing. She was convinced that the ancient Indians who had built the mound had had the foresight to preserve it by constructing an elaborate system of drainage canals. Was not the fact that it was still high and dry and intact proof of that? Surely, Doctors Phillips, Gonzalez, and Ferguson could see that—but they wouldn't. They had seized the opportunity to put her down and it rather amused her. She did not let them get the upper hand. She had worked too long and too hard all these past years to make a reputation for herself in the field and such trivial things as petty jealousy and sneaky acts such as that which Adam Phillips had done—entering the tunnel before all was in readiness for the exploration—just to hog all the glory for himself—did not irk her. She smiled at them and said, "Gentlemen, don't you think we ought to investigate the source of that drumming?"

Ferguson and Gonzalez nodded without enthusiasm. They glanced apprehensively toward the black mouth of the tunnel in the base of the pyramid-like mound. It was obvious that they were quite frightened and were not telling her everything.

"What's the matter?" Julie pressed them. "Are you afraid to go in there after Adam?"

"It isn't that, Julie," ventured Ferguson, stuffily clearing his throat and scratching his neck after slapping at a mosquito. "It's just that Adam told us he'd only be a few minutes and under no circumstances were we to follow until he made certain that the tunnel was adequately shored-up and there was no danger of a cave-in."

"A likely story," Julie said without sounding miffed. "He told you that in case I found out."

Suddenly, as abruptly as it had begun, the drumming ceased. A heavy veil of silence descended and not even the sound of the cicada was heard.

Gonzalez and Ferguson took several steps toward the tunnel and halted. They whispered something Julie could not overhear and then Gonzalez turned and said, "It might be better if you go back to your camper, Julie."

"Why?" she asked. "Are you afraid I might hog the glory of this find? Afraid the trustees won't look too kindly upon you if I share in the credit?"

"It isn't that at all," Gonzalez said. He knew perfectly well that Julie had hit it on the head but there was no way to rebut what she had said.

"It's the drum we heard," he said. "I understand the natives—the Cajuns around here—are a superstitious lot and they may be up to something to frighten us away."

"You think those sounds were voodoo tom-toms?" Julie said. Her eyes were crinkled with amusement. She had spent too many years studying the American Indians before she had become a specialist in archaeology and she knew that the drumming they had heard was *not* by any means a voodoo drum but was, instead, an Indian tom-tom! And what was more, she recalled that the drum beat in its staccato rhythm which they had heard was the rallying beat calling a war party to a pow-wow. It had just dawned on her and she was not about to tell the two men what she remembered. Moreover, Julie recalled that the Cajuns used a different type drum from that of the Indians and the sound was distinctly different.

Ferguson and Gonzalez laughed. Finally, Gonzalez said, "Yes, that's what it was—a voodoo drum. The Cajuns have been trying to scare us away from here ever since the mound was discovered last week. They say it's a taboo place of evil and all that rot. Ha ha. No wonder this find has gone undetected all these years. It's lucky for us the conservation team from the Government happened to pass here when they did. Now, be a good girl, Julie. Go back to your camper and go to bed."

"Aren't you afraid I'll call the university on my mobile radio and report that voodoo drums have been heard coming from the secret tunnel in the mound?"

"You wouldn't!" Ferguson cried.

"You never could take a joke," Julie laughed, turning and walking toward her camper. She went inside and locked the rear door after her. Then she walked to the front of the cab and stepped down between the driver's and passenger's seats to check the doors and windows to be certain they were securely locked. Once she had done this she breathed easier, kicked off her sneakers, and then plopped fully clothed across the sheets covering her foam rubber bed. With the flashlight near at hand she closed her eyes and tried not to think about the tom-toms—or had they been voodoo drums after all and had it merely sounded as if it had been coming from the tunnel in the base of the Indian mound? With these questions in her mind, Julie Chambers fell into an exhausted sleep.

When Dr. Adam Phillips entered the tunnel after having warned his two associates to keep mum about what he was doing, especially since they did not want Julie to know that he had preempted her from being present when the tunnel was explored, he expected to find that the tunnel led into a burial chamber like many of the others of the Pueblos, Aztecs, and Mayans he had explored down through the years. As he moved cautiously through the narrow confines of the strangely dry atmosphere guided only by the miner's light mounted in the peak of his cap, he began to realize that something was *different* about this mound which he had never encountered before. Instead of the musty odor of great age and the gritty taste of dust there was the odor of charred wood and incense in the air.

He reached what seemed to be the end of the tunnel after proceeding some fifty feet into the center of the mound. Just as he started around a bend in the tunnel he felt something lash around his ankles and a moment later he was hurtling into the air where he was finally jerked bodily to a halt, dangling upside down by his legs. He'd been caught in a primitive snare. His cap had dropped to the ground and illuminated a cavern-like chamber with a high vaulted ceiling that measured at least twenty feet in height and seventy by seventy feet in length and breadth. A moment later he saw the aged figure of an Indian in animal skins and painted face. The figure was that of a medicine man or shaman—and he was very much alive!

Before Adam Phillips could find his voice, the shaman whipped out a gleaming iron knife and plunged it into the cap with the miner's lamp. He missed the battery powered casing and then drew back quickly to avoid allowing the ray of light to touch him. He then raised a gourd rattle and shook it at the still shining light. After a moment he cocked his head and peered up at Adam. The open jaws of the wolf's head of the skin with its yellow, gleaming teeth gaped at Adam.

"White man," the shaman said, "why have you entered this holy place of the great undead spirits with your evil eye?"

"I am a man of peace," Adam said, finally catching his breath enough to answer. "I have come in peace. I meant you no harm. I did not know you live here."

"Why have you come?"

"To explore in peace. To understand the ways of your people," Adam said. "Will you please let me down? I mean you no harm."

The shaman shook the gourd rattle at Adam. Then he looked down at the flashlight and approached it with some trepidation. He was quite fearful of the flashlight and was not about to touch it for he had never seen anything like it before.

"I will cut you down," the shaman said finally when he realized that the flashlight was inert and not harmful. "But you will please not make your evil eye look upon me. I am Father Chitimacha, shaman of the Chitimacha wolf warriors and I will take your scalp if you cast your evil eye upon me or upon the mounds of the undead future chiefs I guard here."

The medicine man approached the knots of twine affixed to stakes driven into the wall which were holding Adam suspended in midair from his ankles. He produced a tomahawk from somewhere beneath the robe and gave the ropes one swift chop. Adam dropped to the ground heavily.

When Adam managed to regain his wind and sit up, the shaman was standing a few feet from him with the tomahawk menacingly held shoulder height. "Speak, white man," he said. "Why do you desecrate this holy place?"

"I told you," Adam said, "in order to understand the ways of your people."

"Why?"

"To write it in history books so all the world will know of your people's lives and deeds." Adam realized at that moment that he had entered a place in which time had somehow stood still. He was addressing himself to an Indian medicine man of the past. But which past? How long ago? Fifty years? A hundred or perhaps more? Certainly not more, Adam Phillips reasoned, for Father Chitimacha spoke tolerable English which meant that he had learned the language from Americans—or Englishmen.

"Father Chitimacha," Adam asked, "how long have you been here in this mound and why are you here?"

"I choose not to tell you, white man."

"Will you tell me if I give my magic lamp to you?" he asked, pointing at the flashlight.

The medicine man was overwhelmed. He drew a deep breath and exhaled, gazing longingly at the burning light. "It is a bargain," he said. "But only if the magic lamp is not evil."

"It is not evil." Adam motioned again, as if to ask permission to pick up the fallen cap and miner's lamp. The Indian tightened his grip on the handle of the feathered tomahawk. He nodded assent.

Adam slowly crawled forward and reached the lamp. He lifted it carefully so as not to cause the beam of light to fall upon the Indian. Then he switched it off, plunging the room into total darkness. A moment later he switched the lamp on again and held it toward the Indian. "You touch this button here and the light goes on and when you touch this button beneath it, the light goes off. Sabe?"

"Me sabe," Father Chitimacha said. He continued to hold the tomahawk aloft as he accepted the lamp from Adam. Then he touched the button and the light went out. He touched the second button and the light went on again. At this, the Indian laughed.

"Answer my questions," Adam said. "How long have you been here and why are you here?"

The shaman laughed toothily. "I have been here for as many moons as there are arrows in that pit." He turned and pointed at a deep pit containing at least fifteen hundred to two thousand arrows.

"And why are you here?"

"I guard over the undead bodies of the great chiefs' sons who will one day rise up again united as fourteen nations." He pointed at a series of grave-like mounds which were arranged in a semi-circle ten feet from where they were.

"What do you mean, rise up united as fourteen nations?"

"They will make war against the white man and drive him back into the sea. We will take back the land the white man has stolen from the red man. It is written in the great scrolls."

Adam was unable to believe his ears. He stared at the aged medicine man incredulously. Now that the shock was wearing off he realized that either this was one gigantic hoax or else it was surely something right out of mythology.

"How will you bring the undead warriors back to life? Surely, if they're buried there, they're dead, aren't they?"

"They are not dead. They hibernate like the great bear, only for many hundreds of moons."

"And you are here to bring them back to life? How on earth will you do that?"

The shaman touched a beaded pouch hanging from a leather thong around his neck. "I guard with my life the fourteen seeds which will be sown when the time is come."

"The seeds you speak of—they're in that sack?"

"Yes," the Indian said. "And it is written that any who enter here will not leave with the secret of this holy place of the great fourteen spirits. Ever since your great white father in Washington spoke with a forked tongue and drove the mighty fourteen Indian nations west of the Mississippi and to the reservations we have been——"

"You're *not* going to kill me——" Adam said when it dawned on him that the medicine man had told him that no one would leave with the secret of the holy place.

"You will die as all men die," the Indian said.

"But that would be cold-blooded murder——"

"I know not of this thing which you speak—cold-blooded murder."

Adam realized then that he had to resort to a ruse in order to get out of there with his skin. The deadly-looking tomahawk clenched in the old man's hand meant business. Either this was all a dream or madness or anything but real and Adam was hopelessly trapped. If this was true and if it was really happening, then he wanted to know more—before effecting his escape. The pouch around the shaman's neck intrigued him as well and he knew that if he could play for time, perhaps trick the old Indian, he might stand a chance of getting out of there—or perhaps stalling long enough for Ferguson and Gonzalez to come in after him. Yes, Adam decided hopefully—if he could stall long enough then he might seize the tomahawk and overpower the old medicine man. If only he hadn't told Gonzalez and Ferguson not to follow him.

"You say you've been here for as many moons as there are arrows in that pit," Adam said, watching the old Indian carefully. "How can I believe that? No mortal man ever lived that long. Why, that's more than a hundred years."

"I no care what you believe, white man," the medicine man said. "Soon you will die. Even as you breathe the air in this sanctified place you are breathing in the air of death and soon you will not have the strength to cry out or move or crawl like the snake."

At this, Adam tried to get up. He could hardly make it to his feet. He staggered, lost his balance, and fell. Suddenly he had become so weak he could scarcely move. The old Indian had not lied. There was something evil and deadly in the chamber and it was sapping the very life from his body with each breath he drew. The horror of it all struck him. He knew he had to make his move to escape before it would be too late. With all the remaining strength he could muster, Adam lunged at the shaman and managed to seize the handle of the tomahawk before it could be used on him.

Adam, now fighting for his life, wrested the weapon out of the Indian's clenched fist. He fell back but managed to stand erect upon rubbery legs as he brought up the tomahawk and then struck. The blade slashed the Indian across the face. Adam fell helplessly, the effort having cost him the last remaining strength in his body. He rolled over and looked up, abject horror now in his gaze as he contemplated what he had just done. The blow he had struck had found its mark—but the shaman wasn't bleeding! His leathery flesh had been sliced away to the cheekbone but he apparently wasn't harmed.

Then, as though watching a film unreel in slow motion pictures, Adam saw Father Chitimacha retrieve his tomahawk and kneel down beside his prostrate body. The Indian seized his hair in his right hand and with a deft blow of the sharp blade, scalped him. Even as the blood gushed down Adam's face and into his eyes, he was still conscious, though helpless now and insensible to the pain he knew he ought to be feeling but wasn't. He couldn't understand it. Perhaps it was the gas in the tunnel. Yes, of course, he decided, that was it—but now it was too late. The Indian arose, holding aloft Adam's gory scalp with the blood dripping from it. He leered at Adam and emitted a strange whooping cry of triumph. Then he fastened the scalp to the sash around his buckskin trousers and wiped the tomahawk blade on it.

Adam, barely conscious, watched helplessly, resigned to the inevitability of his imminent death. His vision began to blur and grow dim and in the fading light of his eyes he saw the shaman sitting cross-legged before the semi-circle of burial mounds. The pouch was removed from around his neck and the seeds spilled into a leathery palm. One by one the shaman tossed a seed upon each mound in turn. When this was done he began to chant and beat on a tom-tom which he put his legs around. At first the strange rhythmic beat was like that of a dying heartbeat; but finally the cadence changed and it became strong and steady like that of a warrior's heart.

The life blood ebbed from Adam's inert body. He was totally helpless, unable to move or speak. He could still see and he watched the eerie scene as though it were but a dream. He saw the mound nearest him begin to move as if some great creature which had been buried under it was now awakening and trying to burrow its way to the surface. After a few minutes a hand emerged and clawed the air. The sight was terrifying and Adam was relieved because the fear that would have ripped at his heart was no longer there. A moment after, a second hand pushed its way through the earth and then two sinewy arms followed and after that, an Indian brave climbed out of the grave. He was a young man of powerful build. He was attired in a loincloth, leggings, waistcoat, and war paint. He was covered with dirt and dust which he ignored as he reached down into the grave and withdrew a quiver of arrows, a bow, knife, and tomahawk.

Father Chitimacha continued his frenetic beating of the tom-tom. He seemed totally impervious to the warrior who had just crawled out of the grave and he did not seem to be aware of the other grave mounds also coming to life. Then, each mound in turn was pushed aside as another Indian brave, and then another emerged.

Finally, when the last of the fourteen mounds had been vacated, the aged shaman ceased his drumming and arose, pulling his great wolfskin over his head and body.

The first brave who had emerged approached the old man and dropped to one knee before him, resting his weight on the bow like a cane. "Father Chitimacha," he said, "you have cared for us well. Is this the time for us, the sons of the great chiefs of the fourteen Indian nations, to go to rally all the red men for the great battle against the white invaders?"

"Yes, Running Deer," the shaman said. "This is the time. Many moons have passed—as many as there are arrows in the pit—since the forked-tongued Great White Father in Washington, Andrew Jackson, sent his treacherous agents to our brothers the Choctaws, the Chickasaws, the Cherokee, and the Creeks and forced them across the Mississippi, breaking the treaties and usurping their lands. Then, it was too late to rise up against the white man, so the great chiefs of the fourteen nations sent you, their warrior sons, here to this secret mound where I have watched over your undead spirits and bodies until this hour. It was written that the day will come for you to arise when the white man intrudes on this holy of holy places and yonder lies that white man whose scalp I now hold before you." With that, Father Chitimacha, shaman of the Chitimacha wolf warriors of old, snatched Adam's bloodied scalp from his belt and held it up for them to see. The braves murmured admiringly and then sank to their knees to pay homage to him.

The shaman returned the scalp to his belt and then went to a niche in the earthen wall where he withdrew a dusty leather pouch. He opened it and removed seven animal skin scrolls. He carried the scrolls to Running Deer and said, "Take these, my son, and distribute them to your brothers."

Running Deer lifted his head and then opened the first scroll. He read it carefully and said, "Sharp Tomahawk of the Cherokee and Cold Wind of the Shawnee—this is to be yours. Guard it well, my brothers." Sharp Tomahawk came forward and touched his clenched fist to his breast and then took the scroll. He read it quickly and then gave it to Cold Wind who also saluted Running Deer.

"Blazing Arrow of the Susquehanna and Standing Wolf of the Comanche."

Two more braves stepped forward, saluted him and took the scroll.

"Laughing Bear of the Shoshoni, Fire Arrow of the Kickapoo, Long Feather of the Omahas, Redwing of the Apache, Gray Eagle of the Ute, Santana of the Cayuse, Peshewah of the Pawnee, Spirit Walker of the Creek, and War Pony of the Seneca—my brothers. Guard these sacred scrolls well. We will depart this kiva together in a war party. I will lead you to the places where the white man has sent our people. We will march together and kill all who stand in our way. Arm yourselves now, my brothers, from yonder pit which Father Chitimacha has filled with arrows. He has made one arrow for each moon we lay as dead men awaiting this day. Now we will take a thousand white men for each arrow he has made."

Father Chitimacha went to Adam's still living body and knelt beside it, holding a gleaming knife blade high in the air. "I will now cut out the first white heart so you may partake of your first meal in all these moons. Fresh blood and *sofk* cakes, my young brothers." With that, the shaman plunged the blade deftly into the chest of Adam Phillips. He removed the dead man's heart and held it up for all to see. Then he arose and went to the center of the kiva where he placed the heart upon a great square of *sofk*, the cake-like bread made from cornmeal. As the blood gushed forth from the heart each brave stepped forward and took a cake from the square. When each man had a cake, Running Deer held his in the air and turned toward the shaman.

"May this be our first and last morsel of maize cake until the last white man has been driven from our hunting ground forever!"

"Eeeyah!" the others shouted.

As they ate their cakes, Father Chitimacha held up one hand for attention. "My young braves, harken to what I say. Many strange things have happened in the hunting ground beyond and you will not find the same world out there that you left. Great winged birds that carry magic lamps and many white men roar louder than the thunder across the skies. Horseless wagons with wheels soft as the hooves of Indian ponies ride the trails which are now covered over with white stone taken from our mountains. The great trees which once grew everywhere are no more and pueblos as high as mountains now stand where there were once wikkiups and Indian villages. Argh! It pains me to go on, but I must warn you—it is not the same earth and moon and sky."

The shaman went to the place where he'd thrown the cap and miner's lamp which had been Adam Phillips'. He picked it up and pressed the button. The braves looking on drew back in surprise when they saw the beam of light.

"This is a magic lamp. It will not give you the evil eye. Here, examine it, my brothers."

Running Deer took the lamp and pressed the buttons. He smiled and handed it to the next man who in turn did likewise.

Suddenly, Father Chitimacha held up his tomahawk. It was a signal for silence. Footsteps were heard approaching the kiva through the secret tunnel.

Running Deer drew his blade and motioned for War Pony who was nearest at hand. The two braves flattened themselves against the wall on either side of the tunnel entrance, their blades poised, ready to strike down the intruders.

Rounding the last turn, Gonzalez and Ferguson walked slowly, playing a searchlight ahead of them. Gonzalez was holding a small handgun in his shaking hand.

The moment they stepped into the kiva Running Deer and War Pony were upon them. As Running Deer slid his blade between Gonzalez' shoulder blades the gun in Gonzalez' hand went off three times in rapid succession. He was dead before Running Deer released him—but he had succeeded in blinding the shaman with one of his wild shots. Peshewah of the Pawnees had part of his head blown off and Fire Arrow of the Kickapoos suffered a shattered kneecap.

Ferguson and Gonzalez had no idea what happened. They were slain instantly.

Running Deer was silent as he inspected the wounds suffered by his two braves and the medicine man. "You will stay here," he said. "We will not travel with a blind man, a cripple, and a man who has no face. As in the old days the wounded remain behind."

"You must go now, Running Deer," said the shaman. "Forget us. Think only of what you must do. Rally the tribes and make your plans to drive the white man out of our land. Peshewah and Fire Arrow and I shall return to the mounds to sleep the long sleep. We will be here when you return someday to plant the magic seeds on our mounds. May the Great Spirit guide you to victory before many moons have gone."

Running Deer grunted. He motioned for the eleven remaining braves to follow him, then entered the tunnel, moving swiftly on moccasin-clad feet. As they filed out of the kiva beneath the burial mound and through the tunnel they entered the world they had last seen in the white man's year of 1830.

It was not yet light when they reached the settlement of Cut Off some thirteen miles north of where they'd been buried for nearly a century and a half. Following the stars as they had learned in the days of old, Running Deer and the Cherokee, Sharp Tomahawk, led the war party cautiously, taking care to avoid any encounter with the white man. They had no desire to make contact with the enemy until they were nearer to their red brothers who they believed were imprisoned on reservations somewhere to the north and west of the great river called the Mississippi.

When they reached the highway for the first time, the party halted to inspect the asphalt roadbed. Laughing Bear of the Shoshone hacked off a piece of the asphalt and tasted it. He roared with laughter and explained, "It is like the tar pits near the hunting grounds of my land in the country of the setting sun."

"The white man brought it far to make this trail," observed Running Deer. "Shoshone country is three moon's march from here."

Sharp Tomahawk inspected the bit of asphalt. "Ugh," he said, "tar pits from Cherokee country, too."

Suddenly one of the Indians standing a dozen yards north of the group cried, "My brothers! This trail is for the iron horse. One comes now—see its magic lamps!"

Running Deer gave the signal and the party scattered to the brush on either side of the highway. They watched from hiding as a large tractor trailer came into view speeding eastward. It roared by them and vanished around a bend.

The Indians emerged from hiding, expressions of awe on their faces.

"It goes like a chariot of lightning and thunder——"

"It is mighty as an avalanche falling down the mountain."

Running Deer held up a hand for silence. "Let us go away from this place, my brothers. We must find a place of shelter and cool water. We will journey by night and sleep by day until we have reached the land of our brothers."

The others fell into step behind him as Running Deer led the way, running along the side of the road. In the east the sun began to rise, its lengthening gray light illuminating the landscape for them, revealing for their amazed eyes to behold more strange and wondrous sights than they had ever seen.

Running Deer stopped to gaze up at a high tension cable tower which stretched across the road high above them and ran from one horizon to the other as far as the eye could see.

The others gathered around, craning their necks looking upward. War Pony, the Seneca, put down his quiver, bow, and lance and trotted over to the tower. He clambered up it and within a few minutes was at the top within reach of the cables. Then he drew his knife and began to slash at the cables. A moment later there was a blue flash of light as thousands of volts coursed through his body. He dropped the knife and the flashing sputtering electricity flow ceased.

"It is magic fire!" he shouted down at the others. "We must destroy it." With that, he drew his tomahawk and began to chop at the cable nearest him. The wire fell sputtering with jagged sparks and blue flame across the trestle of the tower. Unmindful of the current flashing all around him, War Pony continued to hack at the cables until he had felled the five remaining ones. Then he climbed down and rejoined the others. As he bent to pick up his lance and bow and arrows Running Deer came over to him and after looking at his singed hair and sniffing the acrid odor of burned flesh, said, "White man sends his magic fire through ropes. We must not cut any more magic fire ropes for it burns off the flesh and the hair."

"I saw a strange house in the bayou," War Pony said, pointing the way. "It is not far and there is a stream running right by it."

The others fell into step behind him as he ran ahead. A few minutes later they reached a small concrete windowless building beneath a hundred-foot microwave relay tower. Running Deer and two of the others circled around and after satisfying themselves that it was unoccupied, approached the door and tried to open it. The door was locked. Running Deer made short work of it with his tomahawk and when it swung open, entered gingerly, holding his tomahawk at the ready.

Except for some electronic equipment and a large console containing lighted dials and switches, the building was deserted and otherwise unfurnished. Running Deer peered at the console and then signaled the others to attack it with their tomahawks. They smashed the glass dials and when sparks began to sputter and fly after they broke off several switches, they went to work at it in a frenzy.

When the power obviously short-circuited and the sputtering and sparks ceased, Running Deer announced, "We have killed it. Rest now, my brothers."

"No, we must not rest," said a brave who was standing in the doorway. He was Spirit Walker, the Creek. "Come, I will show why we must not rest." He motioned for them to follow and then led the way outdoors toward the banks of a stream. When they caught up to him he pointed down at the stream and wept openly. "White man, he has destroyed the pure water and killed the fish that once swam here. He has poisoned our water and our land."

The others knelt at the edge of the stream and shook their heads in disbelief. Spirit Walker was right. Now they could not rest. The white man had destroyed the stream as he had destroyed the land of their forefathers by building ribbons of tar for their iron horses which they stretched from east to west and north and south as far as the eye could see and they had erected huge towers to carry their magic fire ropes. They could not rest now because they had to drive the white man out of this land of theirs before even the birds in the skies and the wild animals underfoot would be destroyed too.

Suddenly, from somewhere in the distant skies they heard a strange roar approaching. The Indians froze in their tracks gazing toward the horizon. A great jetliner came into view, spewing its black exhaust after it. Moments later it roared overhead at a low altitude with such a fearful din that the Indians dove for cover. Only Gray Eagle, the Ute, and Redwing, the Apache, had the presence of mind to send their arrows skyward in a vain effort to bring it down.

"The white man's iron bird with the magic lamps," Running Deer said. "Father Chitimacha spoke of it but I did not realize it was big like a herd of buffalo and made the noise of a stampede——"

Two

Julie Chambers awakened amidst a terrifying dream. She sat bold upright in her camper bed shaking in fright. She had just envisioned Dr. Adam Phillips being eviscerated by an aged medicine man who had been lurking deep in the bowels of the Indian burial mound in a sort of kiva or underground chamber.

Although she tried to tell herself it was just a silly, nonsensical dream, she could not convince herself of this. She got out of bed and peered at her watch. It was five-fifty. In a few minutes it would be dawn, time to arise anyway. That morning she would have her work cut out for her. She would be required to set up the scientific equipment before they would enter the hidden tunnel entrance she and Gonzalez had discovered while sifting through the dirt, picking pot sherds out of the screen shaker. Until that moment they had found nothing extraordinary or anything which would indicate the age of the mound or who had built it. But with the discovery of the underground passage which had been so cleverly concealed, it had become one of the most important finds Julie and the others had ever excavated. It was an archaeologist's dream come true. And yet, there was something ominous, menacing, threatening about the entire find that she could not quite understand. She had the feeling, despite what the Cajun woman had said, that the mound had deliberately been built way down there in the heart of the bayou country because the mound builders had not wanted anyone to find it. Moreover, they had been so secretive about the construction of the mound that they had taken care to build it in a hidden savannah surrounded by trees and foliage and virtually inaccessible by land—*because* they had an ulterior motive for doing so.

As to *what* that motive was, Julie had no idea. But of one thing she *was* certain. The tom-tom she and the others had heard during the night was no ordinary tom-tom, nor was it a voodoo rites drum or anything designed to merely frighten curiosity-seekers like them away. That place was not taboo to the Cajun people in the region just because of some idle superstition either. They had had a perfectly valid reason for making the area surrounding the mound off-limits to everyone: and that reason, as Julie was beginning to believe, *did have* something to do with things ordinary men did not understand.

She splashed some cool water on her face and wrists which she took from the gas refrigerator in the bulkhead between the sleeping compartment and the cab of her camper and felt better at once. Then she put on her sneakers, broke out the surveying equipment from the locker which they planned to use for mapping and measuring the tunnel and then went outdoors. The first gray light of morning illuminated the landscape in a ghostly half-light. It was eerie, weird, and she got the feeling that something was terribly wrong. After she reached the tunnel entrance and set up the transit, she walked to the men's tents and called, "Dr. Phillips? Dr. Gonzalez? Dr. Ferguson?"

There was no answer. Just the unearthly silence.

She opened the flap to Adam Phillips' tent and looked inside. He was not there and his cot apparently had not been slept in. A sense of panic gripped her when she reached the other tent and found it deserted also.

The men had entered the tunnel and were probably at that moment exploring the depths of the mound. She was not at all angry because they had left her out of it. That was to be expected. But she was unduly alarmed because they had entered without first taking the usual precautions and making a written report of their step-by-step exploration. Samples of the dust and soil ought to have been placed in hermetically sealed containers for later laboratory analysis. Measurements ought to have been made of the size of the tunnel and it ought to have been thoroughly inspected before entering to insure that it was safe. Many other tests ought to have been conducted first, too, and it was because none of this had been done that Julie was distressed—not because they had left her behind.

She gingerly approached the tunnel, taking her time, searching for footprints. She saw in the dust the footprints she'd been looking for—and then others which looked strangely like those of a number of men wearing stockings or moccasins. Moccasins? she said aloud, kneeling to inspect the prints. She had often found them in the dust of buried cities in rooms she had explored in Central America and in the southwestern United States. Once she had entered a pueblo underground chamber she had discovered and found similar footprints there. She had painstakingly taken plaster casts of these. Later, when the date on charcoal found in the fooptrints came back from the carbon-dating laboratory, she had been ecstatic to learn that the prints had been made more than twelve hundred years ago and she had been the first person to see them in all that time.

Julie was not one to jump to conclusions without finding definite proof first, so she dispelled the idea from her mind that the footprints had been made long ago until she had investigated further.

After calling the names of the others several more times, she decided to take a flashlight and follow their footprints into the tunnel. As she did so, entering deep into the ancient tunnel, she grew aware of the strong odor of gas. And then it hit her: it was methane gas! There was no mistaking the smell. She turned and ran out of the tunnel and went to her camper where she opened a locker and removed a small oxygen breathing tank and a face mask. Donning this, she took a small portable gas detector with her and reentered the tunnel. With each step she took she grew more apprehensive about the evil which she was now certain had befallen the three men. The fools! she thought. Whatever happened served them right for not going about this in a scientific manner.

When she finally reached the end of the tunnel and entered the kiva she almost stumbled over Adam Phillip's mutilated body before her searchlight illuminated it. The moment the ray of light played down upon his scalpless head she staggered backward, horrified, gasping in the face mask. If it had not have been for the oxygen she was breathing, she would have fainted. But after several trying moments she pulled herself together and played the flashlight around the interior of the cavern-like room, allowing it to pass quickly over Adam Phillips' gory body. She did not want to look. Knowing he was dead and had been brutally slain and his remains possibly mutilated, too, was enough to turn her stomach. She saw the unearthed burial mounds and the pit of arrows and the drawing and scrolls on the walls and then she saw what appeared to be the mummified remains of a medicine man and two Indian braves. She wasn't about to investigate the remains then. She wasn't able to think coherently—and when she next saw the bodies of Ferguson and Gonzalez, she all but went to pieces entirely. After a moment of stunned horror, she ran out of the tunnel screaming into her face mask. She did not stop running until she had reached the comparative security of the camper and had locked herself in. Then she hurled aside the face mask and canister of oxygen attached to it and sat down on the edge of her bed, shaking violently, her knees knocking, her teeth chattering, hardly able to breathe because of the choking sobs she could neither seem to bring up nor swallow.

She did not know what to think. Had there been a fight with knives between Phillips, Gonzalez, and Ferguson? Was such a thing likely? Had they killed each other? Or had they been slain by someone or some*thing* unknown? And if so, *why?* Because they had intruded where they were not wanted, was *that* the reason?

It didn't make sense. Finally, when she had gotten over her first initial shock and fright she started to think clearly once again. First things were first. She went to the mobile radio mounted in the cab of the camper and radioed the county sheriff. When she had related part of the story, that three archaeologists were inside the old Indian mound they'd been excavating—dead—she was asked to identify herself and state her exact location. It seemed that the local sheriff's office had not yet learned that archaeologists were working in the bayou or that an ancient burial mound had been found there. She gave the information requested and then signed off. Next, Julie put through a mobile telephone call to the university where she reported to the archaeology department administrator the facts as she knew them—and the news of the tragic deaths of Dr. Phillips and the others.

She was told not to say anything to the news media for the university could ill afford any adverse publicity since this might embarrass the institution and perhaps even cause the financial supporters of the archaeology program to cut off the funds needed to continue the research and study. She assured the administrator she would do just that and then signed off.

For several minutes afterward she sat at the radio, looking outside the camper, expecting to see at any moment someone or some*thing* coming for her too. She had wanted to call Eric Douglas, her ex-fiancé. She had broken off their engagement a few days before she left North Carolina to work on the find there in the bayou, but couldn't bring herself to do so. Eric had emphatically insisted that if she really wanted to settle down and get married to him she would have to stop traipsing around in the wilds of North, Central, and South America in that camper of hers. It was bad enough that his career as an investigator for the Office of Federal Security often took him to the far corners of the Americas for weeks at a time on various missions, secret and otherwise—therefore, it wouldn't do for both of them to be God-knows-where year in and year out. "You can't have your cake and eat it too," Eric had told her when she had given him back the engagement ring he had given her for the sixth time in the past two years. "So either you quit or else we have no other alternative but to go our separate ways even if we do love each other. No wife of mine is going off by herself to dig up pot shards in the wilderness. What kind of a life would that be?"

Each time Julie had returned from one of the field trips she felt that she wanted nothing better than to settle down in her own home once and for all; but invariably the call came that sent her packing to go off on another expedition to dig up the ruins of another ancient Indian village or burial mound or buried temple. And so it had happened this time, too, just as it had happened the time before when she had gone to unearth a new temple excavation in Mexico; and the time before that when she had worked for seven months on Pottery Hill, the pueblo ruin in Navajo County, Arizona, unearthing a newly-discovered kiva beneath one of the pueblos there.

On impulse Julie switched on the radio transmitter and called the mobile operator, placing a call to Eric Douglas in Atlanta, Georgia. A few moments later she heard the phone ringing at the other end of the radio patch and then Eric's voice. From the tone of his voice she knew he was still in bed. But when she told him what had happened and where she was, he asked her for explicit instructions how to find her by air and then said he would leave at once in his private helicopter and she could expect him within three hours. "Stay right where you are, darling," he said. "Don't unlock the camper doors until the police get there and even then be very careful. See you soon."

Julie replaced the handset on the hook and double-checked the doors to make certain they were really locked. Then she moved to the living quarters of the camper and sat upon the edge of her bed in a state of shaky anxiety to peer out of the rear windows, peeking around the curtains, watching for the police who would eventually be coming down the narrow twisting bayou road and across the savannah to the mound hidden by the trees. As she waited she could not stop thinking about Phillips, Gonzalez, and Ferguson whose bodies lay inside the kiva. How they had died was obvious. But *who* had killed them and *why?* And the strange moccasin footprints she had seen—what about them? Had they been left by the killers? This was the strangest part of all. Julie knew that such moccasins were rarely worn by anyone these days—unless they were at Indian dances or ritual ceremonies.

She thought of the Cajun woman's warning and suddenly remembered the sachet which she still had in her breast pocket. She touched it and then took it out of her pocket. The odor of garlic and herbs smelled like methane gas. Then it dawned on her. She had smelled the cachet and not methane gas at all. Or had she? Julie couldn't be certain. She decided to play it safe when the sheriff's men arrived and warn them to go in cautiously, sniffing for gas.

As she watched and waited she tried to recall everything she had seen inside the underground room. There had been strange parchment scrolls in evidence and one large map-like scroll either of birch bark or animal skin on one wall. She then recalled the mummified remains of the medicine man and the two Indian braves and wondered how old they were and by what circumstance they had met their deaths. Then there was the semi-circular row of fourteen empty grave-like mounds. She could not understand this. Why were the graves open if they *were* graves?

All this would bear looking into and she was anxious to get on with it with a view to learning the secret of the chamber beneath the mound which she somehow instinctively felt had something to do with the grisly deaths of the three professors. She steeled herself to the unbearable thought of seeing their bodies again and told herself it had to be done. Although she tried to think of other things, she could not put the horrible scene out of her mind. She realized it would be foolish to indulge in hysterics and she fought the tremors that threatened her composure. If anything, Julie realized that she would need to concentrate only on recording everything of consequence in the mound and she would need to caution the sheriff's deputies when they investigated the scene not to disturb any of the artifacts and other things which might be of historical or archaeological importance.

Then she found herself thinking about Eric and seeing him again. He had sounded pleased to hear from her even though the last time they'd been together he'd been deeply hurt. She looked forward to being with him and thought that it might be nice, after this affair had been resolved, if they ran up to New Orleans for a few days, perhaps for the Mardi Gras.

At the moment, however, such a possibility was remote and she knew it, but she fantasized it anyway.

During the years she had specialized in archaeological and anthropological investigation she had become insensitive to many things in life and in a way regretted this. She wished she could be more like other women—perhaps if she were that would solve a lot of problems and she would be more than willing to give up her career for another—as a wife to Eric. But she was not like other women and knew she would never be. Her entire life was wrapped up in her career and all else was secondary. Of course it would be nice to be Eric's wife, but it would not be at all pleasant if she were never again to go off by herself to some digs or other to unearth pot shards or mummies or artifacts from other civilizations of long ago.

Without quite knowing why she did so, Julie arose and went to peer out of the windshield of the camper at the mound. Just as she sat down on the step between the two front seats in the cab she saw something that made her stifle a scream. Rigid with fright she saw three figures emerging from the tunnel at the base of the mound. From her vantage point some fifty yards away she saw three Indians in a close group slowly making their way toward the bayou in the west. Two Indian braves in leggings and vests and painted faces were leading an elderly wizened old medicine man by the arms as though he were blind and unable to see. One of the braves limped.

Then it suddenly dawned on her that she was watching the three mummies which she had seen inside the kiva! The mummies, for all intents and purposes, were anything but dead and as they slowly disappeared in the swamp beyond the savannah upon which the mound stood, Julie sank back against the wall inside her camper in a near-faint. It couldn't be! Yet—*it was!*

A few minutes after the Indians had disappeared in the wilds of the bayou she saw the flashing red lights atop four speeding sheriff's department cars bouncing over the ruts of the narrow trail-like road coming toward her. As soon as she saw them, she jumped up, unlocked the door, and ran outside waving her arms at them.

Later, after the bodies had been removed from the mound and the scene had been carefully photographed and the lab technicians had explored the site, the deputies sat down with Julie and took her statement. When she tried to tell them that she had seen three mummified corpses inside which she had later seen leaving the mound, the sheriff's deputies exchanged knowing winks and suggested that Julie leave there at once and see a doctor. They were sure that all she needed was some rest and perhaps sedation and she would be all right.

"I tell you there isn't anything wrong with my mental faculties. I'm not insane nor am I hallucinating because of shock or any other reason. I'm a trained observer, a scientist, and it's my business to report accurately what I see."

"Which was why you imagined you smelled methane gas in there," said the sheriff's deputy who had been questioning Julie. "I told you that, yes. But it was the sachet."

"The voodoo amulet given you by the Cajun woman?"

"You make it sound so—so wrong, so criminal, so vile——"

"But the point is—that's what you really smelled, isn't it? You smelled the bag those voodoo people use to fend off evil spirits and you thought that was methane gas."

"I made a mistake," Julie said in exasperation. A helicopter was coming toward them from the north. Her heart began to beat faster. It would be Eric and he would know what to do. He always knew.

The sheriff's man smiled understandingly. "If you made a mistake about the gas, surely you could have made a similar mistake about what you saw. Mummified Indians that came alive and killed your three companions—fah!"

Julie drew a deep breath, looked at the man, then sighed. "I suppose you think I killed the three of them."

"No, that isn't likely. Whoever did it had to be a man—a powerful man strong enough to kill them with blunt knives and hatchets."

"Tomahawks——"

"All right, lady, have it your way. Tomahawks. They were killed by dead mummies that crawled out of those coccoon-like graves after they came back to life and——"

The helicopter swung down in an arc, the chopping of its rotor engine and blades making such a racket that Julie wasn't able to hear what else the deputy had to say. She got up and ran over to where the helicopter was landing. The moment it lighted on the ground she bent her head and began to run toward the pilot who had put aside his headset and was clambering out. A tall young man smiled at her and greeted her with open arms. They embraced until the momentum of the rotor blade slowed to a halt. Then Eric held her at arms' length and nodded with a frown. "You look awful, Julie."

"You'd better straighten those deputies out," she said, turning when the ambulance removing the three dead men began to drive away over the dirt road heading north.

"Why? What's the matter?"

"I'll give you three guesses—and they're three dead Indians. When I went into the kiva to look for Phillips and the other two, I saw three mummies. Believe me, Eric! I'm not imagining things. One was a medicine man and the other two were warriors. They looked like they were dead to me. And around them were open graves. At first glance I counted roughly fourteen graves arranged in a kind of ceremonial semi-circle. That was after I found Adam Phillips. He was dead, his heart had been cut out of his body and he'd been scalped. Officially the police are listing this as murder and suicide."

Eric blinked at her and then with his arm around her shoulders, walked toward the digs and the tunnel beyond at the base of the mound. When they were out of earshot of the others, Eric said, "Honey, what you need is a change of pace—a good extended vacation in civilization. The Mardi Gras begins next Tuesday. Why don't we run up to New Orleans——?"

Julie nodded her head in refusal. "Eric, Phillips' murder was a ritualistic killing. He was scalped and then his heart was cut out of——"

"You see," Eric interrupted. "You *do* need a change. This thing is getting to you."

"It isn't. The deputies are wrong. It wasn't a murder and suicide like they say. I tell you Gonzalez, Ferguson, and Phillips were done in by Indians."

"Mummified Indians?" he said with a touch of humor.

"It isn't funny. This work isn't a joke like you're always making it out to be, Eric. I tell you something weird has been going on around here and I saw it with my own eyes. Last night I heard a tom-tom. It was an Indian tom-tom and it was calling a war council."

"There must be some other explanation,"he said. "Perhaps the Cajun people were trying to frighten all of you away because they've some illegal stills or something like that in the vicinity. They scare you away blaming the voodoo taboos or whatever and they are free to brew all the booze they can drink and sell."

"That isn't so——"

"Oh, no?" He was adamant now, trying to control his temper. At last he smiled. He had to force it in order not to antagonize her. He had come in answer to her call because he wanted to help and also because he wanted to have one last chance to reason with her—to convince her to give up archaeology and settle down as his wife. "Look, honey. By your own admission you said you had that sachet amulet the Cajun woman gave you that was supposed to ward off evil spirits. Don't you see—if you really weren't letting this get to you, you wouldn't have carried that thing on your person for a single minute."

"I told you, I forgot about it."

"And then sniffed it when you entered the tunnel and believed you were smelling methane gas. You went back and got your breathing apparatus and wore that when you went into the tunnel and the kiva."

"So? I've done that lots of times. You'd be surprised how often vegetable matter decays and causes methane gas to form——"

"This is getting us nowhere. Are you going with me or not?"

"Not until I've been able to study the things inside that kiva. I've got to know what's going on, Eric. I must know what it was I saw."

"You mean the mummies that later came to life and walked into the bayou?"

"Yes, I mean the mummies."

"Are you trying to say you believe they just got up and walked out of there?"

"I'm not saying anything. There've been isolated reports down through the years in which archaeologists have seen very strange things taking place. In one case five witnesses saw a mummy come to life and walk out of a cave that had been sealed up for at least five hundred years."

"You've got to be kidding."

"Quite the contrary, Eric. It happened. The Indians as well as older peoples knew certain tricks of burying people alive who were later—often years later—brought back to life. It was a form of suspended animation, or hibernation, if you wish to call it that. It was known to primitive people around the world but the secret knowledge has been lost to modern man. Some theorize it was accomplished by the use of drugs—but just what those drugs were—or are—we do not know."

"So you want to catch yourself one of those mummies and ask him what that drug is?"

"That isn't a bit funny."

The deputy who had been in charge of the investigation walked over to them and told Julie, "We'll require your presence at the inquest after an autopsy has been made by the medical examiner. Don't leave the county, Miss Chambers. And I'd advise you to keep in touch with us and let us know where you are and how to call you if we need you for further questions."

"I'm free to go in there now and go on with the work?" she asked.

"Yes. We're pretty sure the three men had a fight about something to do with claiming the credit for making the find and there was a violent fight with knives. They killed each other after that fight. It's open and shut. And by the way. If I were you, I wouldn't mention that wild cock-and-bull story you gave us about mummies coming to life."

Julie remained sullen and silent. Eric walked to the deputies' squad car beside him. When they were out of Julie's hearing, Eric said, "Off the record, Deputy, I want to officially remain out of this investigation. But since this has taken place at an historic site which will undoubtedly come under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior, and since I am a special investigator for the Office of Federal Security, perhaps it might be best if I sort of keep the Federal Government advised, you understand."

The deputy contemplated Eric for a moment. "Whatever I can do to cooperate, don't hesitate to ask. Right now I've got to get going. There're some strange goings-on at the northern edge of the bayou county. Power lines are down and a remote microwave station has been sabotaged by vandals."

He turned and got into the car and with a wave of his hand drove off following the other vehicles as they bounced along the narrow, twisting bayou road.

When Eric returned to the edge of the mound where he'd left Julie he found her putting a fresh film pack in her camera. Then she picked up two hand lanterns, and after handing one to Eric, said, "Shall we go, darling? I've a mystery to solve."

"Can you wait a second? I've got to radio Atlanta to tell them where I am. I was supposed to report in this morning."

"Okay. I'm going in alone."

"No, wait for me."

"This won't wait."

He looked at her and realized that she was determined and would not be dissuaded. He was a little surprised, too, for he had expected her to be rather afraid to go into the tunnel, and the kiva beyond, by herself.

He decided it was the best thing that she went it alone for a few minutes, so he bussed her on the cheek and said, "I'll only be a couple of minutes."

"The rig in my camper——" she began, "I forget if I turned it off or not. Please be a dear and make sure it's off after you've used it."

Eric turned and trotted toward the camper. Before he entered he turned and glimpsed Julie going into the tunnel. Then he entered her camper and went to the radio set and turned it on. It had not been on as Julie had thought. He had hardly expected to find it switched on. Julie was too careful a woman for that. She did not forget things like turning off the lights or other electrical equipment. That was one thing about her that he admired. She was responsible and dependable; and these were some of the reasons why he was reasonably certain that her odd report of the three mummies which she had seen coming to life was not without foundation. He did not want her to know that he *was* concerned. He decided to pretend to go on scoffing at her and making fun of what she said because he wanted to keep from alarming her.

After his report to his administrative chief had been made he was advised by use of coded phrases that he should "go ahead with an undercover investigation, but keep it quiet and avoid publicity and statements to the media." The Government was very interested in the report of so-called mummified Indians coming to life and then scalping and murdering archaeologists, especially in the light of other strange reports which had periodically been received from that vicinity, but until then had been attributed to folklore and Cajun superstition.

When Eric joined Julie in the kiva a few minutes later he found her behind her camera which she had mounted on a tripod, busy photographing everything in sight so the scene of the interior could later be studied in the laboratory. Without looking around at him, she pointed at a wall and said, "Take a look at that strange drawing. It's a map and a legend of some kind. See if you can make heads or tails of it."

Eric walked across and peered at the map which was crudely drawn in siennas, reds, indigo, and black upon a crackled animal skin which had been fastened to the wall at its four corners by wooden pegs. After he studied it for a while he said, "It beats me. Looks like a primitive

Indian drawing that shows fourteen different tribes or villages. Different insignias seem to indicate they're allied but not like each other."

"Darling, I'm proud of you," she said, looking up from her camera and the floodlights beside it. "The map signified that a pact was made between fourteen different tribes."

"So—?" he said, looking at her.

"So, look at the other sketches. What do you think *they* mean?"

He studied it for a few minutes and said, "This looks like a pyramid—no, it represents a burial mound—*this* mound, maybe?"

"I think maybe it is. But go on, you're doing fine, Eric."

"One man from each tribe was sent here. The dotted lines indicate this, I think."

"That's what I think."

"Each line terminates in what appears to be a grave——"

"Those graves!" Julie cried, moving beside him and pointing at the empty graves in a semi-circle around the walls of the room. "Now look here. There is a medicine man. See, this figure represents a man wearing a wolf's fur and head. He is the medicine man from the Wolf Warriors. The legend indicates he is of the Chitimacha, a tribe that once lived on the banks of Grand Lake in Louisiana. The medicine man is called Father Chitimacha. See, the mark before the identifying mark means "father." This drawing shows the long-knives or palefaces driving the Indians back to reservations west of the Mississippi. This shows the chiefs in council making a decision. This drawing indicates that one warrior from each tribe, probably a chief's son, was to be sent to the mound to be buried alive until such time that each was to be reborn again when they would return to their fourteen tribes and after a parley or war council—indicated by this drawing—they would amass all the Indian tribes and start a war against the white man and drive the white man back into the sea."

Eric whistled under his breath. It was plain that Julie had interpreted the map correctly. But the whole thing was so absurd he could hardly believe his ears and eyes. He laughed aloud and said, "That reminds me of that old Greek legend about Cadmus, the guy who killed the dragon and then sowed the dragon's teeth and fourteen armed warriors sprang up from out of the ground."

"Yes," Julie said. "And he threw a precious stone at them and they started to fight over it and killed one another trying to get it."

Eric looked at her. He smiled in the light of their flashlights and said, "Julie, I think you're making a mountain out of this molehill."

"Your clichés sometimes get under my fingernails," she said tartly. "I wish you'd stop trying to belittle my work."

"Who's belittling it?" he cried. "I just meant that it's kind of foolish to put all that serious thought into drawings such as that. The Indian tribes arising again to drive the white man back into the sea—I never heard of anything more ridiculous——"

"Darling," she said patiently, nodding as though he was a child who just wouldn't learn, "I'm not putting any serious thought into anything until I've got the tangible proof."

"And the mummies you saw who got up and walked away. What about them? Do you still contend they were dead and they came back to life and just walked out of here?"

"I contend no such thing. All I do is state what I saw and I saw three mummies in here and later I saw those same mummies from my camper window when they walked out and went into the bayou."

Eric thought a moment and then asked, "Do you think they were the ones who scalped and murdered your friends?"

"Can you think of anyone else who might've taken the trouble to scalp Adam Phillips and kill the others? Surely you don't think Ferguson or Gonzalez were capable of such a thing, do you?"

"I never had the pleasure of meeting either man," he said. "But the sheriff's deputies seem to think that's what happened. They found a gun with three discharged shells in the cylinder. *Proof* of a fight."

"Oh, Eric, sometimes you exasperate me to the limits."

He laughed. Then he moved beside her and put his arm around her shoulders. "Aw, don't take it so seriously, darling. I'm sure there's some rational explanation for the whole affair."

"If you think that, then please stop making fun of me."

"If I promise, will you give me a little kiss?"

She eyed him, her head tilted to one side. Then she smiled and gave him a quick kiss on the lips. "Thanks for coming, Eric. I'm glad you're here. If you only knew how much——"

"Never mind that. What do you want me to do? This place depresses me. It smells damp as a tomb."

"It *is* a tomb."

"Yeah?" he said looking around. "Then where are the bodies?"

"I'm glad you asked. There are the empty mounds," she pointed. "Now suppose *you* tell me where the bodies are, Mr. Super Government Sleuth."

Eric looked at the empty grave mounds and shook his head in the negative. "Beats me. Maybe some graverobbers got here first?"

"I doubt that," she said. "We found the kiva tunnel entrance only after some painstakingly tedious excavation." Then she took him by the hand and led him to one of the empty graves and shone her flashlight into it. "Look down there and tell me if it looks like anyone dug up whoever was in there."

"No. It looks like somebody was inside and dug his way out *alone.* The earth is pushed up from beneath."

She turned and played the light around the other mounds. "They're all pushed outward just like this. And there's one other thing that's mighty curious. Do you see any digging implements, shovels, picks, or whatnot around?"

"Okay," Eric said. "So the Indians came back to life. Cadmus' dragon's teeth were sown and fourteen warriors, and oh, yes, a medicine man, too, returned from the grave. Now pinch me. If I'm in Greece, *where* are the dragon's teeth?"

"Don't be funny," she said. "Take another look at that map or chart or whatever it is on the wall. Notice that in this drawing at the corner, it shows a paleface entering the kiva and then we see the medicine man, that's Father Chitimacha, scalping him and removing his heart and then sowing the seeds."

"You're right," Eric siad. "I only know a very little about this sort of thing, but it's commonsense to interpret the drawing as you just did. But who's going to believe it? And where are those Indians now? On the warpath out there somewhere?"

Julie smiled. "See this?" She indicated a number of figures seated in a council circle smoking pipes. "The Indians who've been resurrected from the dead are supposed to call a war council of the Indian nations and they're to form a great army and that army is supposed to march on the whites. You see these drawings here? That's what they obviously mean. So," she gestured with the flashlight, "that means our Indian braves—all fourteen of them—are right now enroute to the tribes from which they're descended to recruit them for the big war."

"You can't be serious?" Eric said with a smile of amusement.

"I've never been more serious."

"Which brings us around to the big question again—who's going to believe this crazy yarn?"

"Somebody had better believe it!" Julie sounded quite alarmed.

Eric shrugged. "And how are these Indians from the past supposed to travel hundreds—thousands of miles—to the reservations? Are they going to walk? And if so, what's going to happen when people see them passing?"

Julie whispered, "I wish to God I knew." She sighed and said, "When men from the past—from the 1830's who've been reborn again step out into this world of ours —who can say what's going to happen?"

Eric took her by the arm and led her to the camera tripod. "What do you say if we pack up that thing and get the hell out of here? This place gives me the willies."

Julie made no reply. She began to unscrew the leg supports of the tripod and then stepped aside as Eric picked it up for her. She showed the way with her flashlight as they left the kiva and began to walk through the tunnel.

"Did you tell the deputies this theory of yours?" Eric asked.

Julie nodded her head from side to side. "They wouldn't even let me begin. So far as they're concerned the professors fought over who was to take the credit for discovering the mound and the underground kiva and they killed each other, or one of them ended his own life after killing and mutilating the others."

"Didn't you ask if they thought it peculiar that Adam Phillips had been scalped and his heart cut out of his body?"

"The deputy said that was unusual, but such things have been known to happen before and he said he'd investigated a lot of knifings and seen worse."

"Now what, Julie?"

She put both of her arms through his as they stepped out into the sunlight and began to walk toward her camper, and smiled up at him. "I've got to develop the film and then make detailed notes of what happened and what we unearthed so far."

"And *I*? What do you want me to do?"

She laughed. "You could help, you know."

Three

Running Deer and Sharp Tomahawk lay hidden on the banks of the great river most of the late afternoon until nightfall. They had gone ahead of the party to scout the lay of the land and to try to decide which was the better route to take. But now Running Deer and Sharp Tomahawk had reached an impasse.

"My brother, Running Deer," Sharp Tomahawk said, "it is time for us to decide. The plan as our forefathers made for us must be changed. We cannot travel in safety because our group of twelve braves is sure to be seen by the white man. We must split into two groups. I will go east with my brother Spirit Walker and four other braves to find the Creek people. You must go north to find your people, the Choctaw, and from there, proceed northwest to the reservations in Texas and Oklahoma and Kansas where that treacherous white father in Washington, Andrew Jackson, sent the other great nations like herds of sheep and packs of dogs. There we will meet again in one moon. There we will hold our council and rally all the Indian nations at a secret pow-wow on the prairie."

"Your counsel is wise, my brother," Running Deer said, "but it is written that we are to obey to the letter the instructions given us. To disobey is to court disaster and defeat."

"Nay, Running Deer," Sharp Tomahawk said, "there is one provision in the parchment that says we are to do whatever is necessary in order to rally the scattered nations. It is written that we are to hunt the buffalo and prepare one buffalo robe for each man; and from those buffalo we have shot with our arrows we are to prepare enough food for a journey to take one moon. When this has been done we are to divide into two war parties and strike at the white man at every opportunity along the way. During the one moon's journey to our council of councils we are to strike terror into the hearts of all white men and it will be as though two great armies are on the march. And when our brothers learn of these great armies on the march, they will know that we are arisen and are to meet them at the great council of war. Yea, my brother, and there is one thing more."

"What is that, Sharp Tomahawk?"

"We have been undead more moons than we expected. A thousand, nay, two thousand moons, I do not know. But I know this: we are as young men now—braves who are younger than our own children's children's children—and if the old ones have not failed us, they would have told the young ones who in turn would have told their young ones that we are not yet dead and that we are to return some day to lead them all in the great war against the white man which is yet to be fought—the war that will drive them out of this land that is rightfully ours——"

"And this we are to remind our fellow braves?"

"Yes, Running Deer. Look around you. See what the white man has done to our hunting ground. The river we watch now, it is black with dead things and living things cannot drink from it nor can the fish live in it. That river which was once as clear as the frozen ice is now so black and vile we cannot bathe nor drink in it. It has taken hundreds of moons for the white man to do all this, has it not?"

Running Deer nodded in agreement. He remembered the days of his youth when he had knelt at the streams in the land of his fathers and drank from them and caught fish in them with his bare hands. He remembered his own father telling him how precious the water was and how every Indian lived only to take from the water and the land that which he needed to live upon or use, but never to wantonly destroy or pollute. Now he breathed in the air and he smelled not the clean fresh air but instead the foul dirty air of dead things he could not recognize. The turgid stench of strange cookfires, of burning tar, of evil smells that sickened him and burned his eyes and the eyes of his brothers, all this Running Deer could not understand.

"We must decide, my brother," Sharp Tomahawk said.

Running Deer grunted. "I have decided. We will hunt the buffalo and when the hunt is over we will divide into two war parties. I will lead my braves to Choctaw country and from there to the land of the Cherokee and the Shawnee and the Apache. In one moon we will meet there, my brother. And on the way we will strike terror to the hearts of the white man. It is agreed."

Sharp Tomahawk clasped Running Deer's arms. "Yea, it is agreed, my brother." Then he turned and looked at the lights of a city on the dark horizon. "We will go there, but we will need canoes."

"Then let us find them," Running Deer said, gathering up his weapons and leading the way northward along the river bank. They reached a small clump of houses at the edge of the river. Tied to pilings at the end of a small pier were two rowboats. After making certain that they were unobserved, they ran stealthily out onto the pier and climbed down into the boats. After searching about in the darkness Sharp Tomahawk whispered across to Running Deer, "There are no paddles."

"I will fetch them," Running Deer said, climbing to the pier and moving soundlessly over the rickety timbers toward a building at the edge on the shore. He went around to the front. A light was burning inside. He paused a moment, then taking his tomahawk out, cocked his leg back and kicked the door open. He rushed inside and found two men sitting at a table playing cards. Without a word Running Deer skillfully dispatched them with two deadly blows from his tomahawk. He paused several moments to bend over their bodies and take their scalps. Then he looked around the cabin and found several oars standing in a corner. He took the oars and before going out, paused another moment to pick up a lighted cigar one of the dead men had been smoking. He puffed the cigar and made a wry face. Then he blew on the embers until they began to glow and set fire to some papers upon a chair. He fanned the fire until it had become a roaring blaze and then went out. He reached the end of the pier, handed one of the oars to Sharp Tomahawk who was standing up in his boat looking at the fire as it began to burn through the flimsy walls of the shack, and then stepped lightly into his boat. They knelt on the keelboards Indian fashion and using the oars like canoe paddles, rowed swiftly downstream.

Just as they turned a bend in the river they saw the flames leaping skyward as fire consumed the pier and the buildings farther back lining the shore. In the distance they heard strange clanging bells and wailings but they did not stop to investigate. When they reached the place where they had concealed themselves they beached the boats and went inland to find their brothers who were awaiting them encamped in a grove of trees.

A few minutes later they reached the camp but found it deserted. Both warriors looked around them in the pale moonlight, silently looking for some clue that would tell them what had happened and why their brothers had left.

Running Deer pointed at the tracks hardly perceptible in the darkness. "A scout came and warned the others. They left in three parties," he said, beginning to follow the footprints. Sharp Tomahawk kept close behind him. After they had traveled some distance they reached a field beside a black top road. Parked in the field was a car and a trailer. In the shrubbery around the perimeter of the field they could see the warriors crouching in hiding, watching the people who had parked their car and trailer.

"It is palefaces with an iron horse and iron covered wagon," Sharp Tomahawk observed.

Cold Wind, the Shawnee, saw them approaching and hastened to join them. His eyes were narrowed in anger as he whispered between compressed lips, "Behold the palefaces desecrating our land. Even now as we lay in three groups watching, they throw the bones of chicken and worthless white paper and iron canisters upon our sacred hunting ground. See," he held forth a tin can with a jagged lid sticking up and a dripping beer can, "this litter of worthless stuff bespoils the Great Spirit's land and endangers the deer and the fox and the rabbit. And listen, my brothers. Inside the iron covered wagon there is a magic box that makes fearful squawkings that frighten away the game and split the ears of all who listen." Cold Wind paused and cupped his hands to his ears. The raucous thunder of a rock and roll record being received over the radio in the trailer could be heard clearly. "Not even the night birds or the cicada come to this place with such a fearful tumult going on."

"How many white men are there?" Running Deer asked.

"Two and two women. The men have thunder sticks. We saw them through the windows."

"Sharp Tomahawk will kill them and take the long rifles from them," Sharp Tomahawk said, clenching his tomahawk and trembling with fury.

"We will scalp them," Running Deer said, holding up the two scalps he had taken from the men at the boat pier, "just as I have taken two already and Father Chitimacha took one before he lost his eyes."

Cold Wind made the sound of an owl and the concealed braves answered by imitating the night cries of thrush and the crow. He turned to Running Deer and Sharp Tomahawk. "All is in readiness."

"Attack," said Running Deer.

Cold Wind cupped his hands to his mouth and warbled. As though of one mind the three groups of hidden braves stealthily began to move from the shrubbery toward the trailer. Standing Wolf and Redwing were the first to reach the screen door and jerk it open, taking the occupants by surprise.

The women screamed and the braves poured through the narrow doorway. Then there was silence as the warriors made short work of them. A few minutes later they emerged holding up their trophies. Gray Eagle was carrying a portable radio and he was grinning from ear to ear as he turned the knob and got different stations on it. Blazing Arrow and Standing Wolf emerged carrying various articles of clothing and the rifles. Two of the others emerged holding aloft the women's scalps still dripping with blood. Santana, the Cayuse, and Long Feather, the Omaha, had the men's scalps.

"Now what we do?" Sharp Tomahawk asked Running Deer and Cold Wind.

"We burn the iron covered wagon and the iron horse."

War Pony, the Seneca, came running over with his hands filled with various objects of silver and grey plastic. He bit each of the items and cast it aside. Then he pressed a small silver cigarette lighter and cried out in surprise and amazement when it ignited. He began to giggle and show it around.

"Silver fire box! See, a silver fire box!"

The Indians were more excited about War Pony's cigarette lighter than they were about any of the other items they had plundered from the trailer. Even the scalps were ignored as they crowded around and watched War Pony flick the lighter on and off.

After the first excitement wore off Running Deer went over to the car and got behind the wheel and turned it. He kicked the control pedals and then when the starter cranked over and the vehicle jerked forward and then stalled, he ran from the car in a fright. Everyone standing around laughed. Running Deer then took his tomahawk and began to smash in the windows. The other braves joined him and before long every window was broken. Then someone investigated the shiny chrome gas tank cap. The gasoline was sniffed and one of the braves stuck an arrow into the filler pipe. He removed the arrow and sniffed it. "Ugh," he cried, "evil poison. Why white man carry in water canteen bad stuff like this?"

War Pony came over with his cigarette lighter and flicked it. The flame ignited the fuel on the arrow head and the Indians cried out in amazement and surprise. "It white man's fire water!"

Giggling, Laughing Bear took the burning arrow and thrust it into the gas tank. There was a violent explosion which hurled them all to the ground as the automobile went up in flames. A moment later the trailer began to burn too as the flames licked over the lacquer paint finish and then roared through the open doors and windows instantly gutting the inside and cremating the victims they had just attacked and slain.

They withdrew to the safety of the woods beyond and watched as the fire consumed the car and trailer. When the wind began to blow the foul-smelling smoke of burning paint and rubber and upholstery and bedding in their direction, Running Deer gave the signal and they began to trot into the woods toward the river bank where the rowboats were concealed.

"That evil smell is like the air we breathe now," Sharp Tomahawk said to Running Deer. "Why white man light his campfires with such vile stuff?"

Running Deer was silent. He reached the boats first and motioned for the others to get in. Then they began to silently paddle into the stream and across to the other bank.

"That is island of New Orleans," Sharp Tomahawk said. "We go there now to find buffalo."

"Ugh," Redwing, the Apache, said, "me thinks there no buffalo there. Buffalo need range and prairie to roam and live. Buffalo no able live in place of bad air that blackens the mouth and burns the eyes."

"Always there be buffalo and wild game here," said Sharp Tomahawk.

"That was before white man came," Gray Eagle said.

"No," Sharp Tomahawk said. "My people the Cherokee chase big herd many times south to island."

"That was in day of your grandfather's youth," Santana said. "I say as Redwing said. There no buffalo there. Buffalo all gone." He gestured with a helpless note of finality.

"We shall see," Running Deer said. "If there no buffalo, then we go to other hunting ground. We will find buffalo."

They reached the east bank and climbed silently out of the boats. Then they went in single file following Running Deer along a concrete wall that ran parallel to the river front. They reached a high fence with barbed wire at the top and halted.

Running Deer chopped at it with his tomahawk and stepped back. "Ugh," he growled, "corral of iron wire. We climb'-m over top but watch-um out for iron thorns at top." He put his tomahawk into his belt, hung his bow over the quiver on his back and then got a grip on the wire fence. He climbed it easily and then stepped over the five strands of barbed wire at the top. Then he jumped down to the other side.

The others followed suit and when they were all over the fence, Running Deer led the way to a building with a sawtoothed roof. Atop the building was a huge smoke stack from which thick soot and clouds of black smoke billowed forth, blanketing the starlit sky.

"What is that?" Blazing Arrow, the Susquehanna, asked, pointing at the top of the stack. "Chimney fire of white man's cookpot?"

One of the other braves had climbed upon a window ledge and was peering through a dirty pane of glass. He jumped down nimbly and said, "Palefaces in there cooking evil waters. Belch out of chimney, see?" he pointed upward.

Running Deer moved around with Sharp Tomahawk to the front of the building. Above the door was a large sign which read DeSoto Chemical Products.

After several difficult moments Running Deer read the sign aloud and then said to the others, "White man is bad, much more bad than we think. He make DeSoto king. DeSoto was bad and kill many braves. His warriors brought pestilence to Indians and he sacked villages, raped our squaws and daughters and wanted gold. To white man DeSoto is hero. To Indian he is evil man much bad. This paleface stink kitchen much bad. We burn'm to ground."

Sharp Tomahawk and Cold Wind went to investigate some drums of chemicals standing outside one of the doors. They lifted one of the drums and carried it back to the group. Sharp Tomahawk then opened the lid of the drum and smelled the powder. He made a wry face, wrinkled his nose, and said, "Rotten eggs from more chickens than in all villages together."

He then turned the drum over and rolled it, the yellow contents spilling forth like a powdery trail, toward the building doorway. It finally came to rest, empty, the label turned upwards which had been stenciled in yellow upon the side. Danger, highly inflammable. Sulphur.

"What mean that writing?" Sharp Tomahawk asked Running Deer, the only brave amongst them who had learned to read the white man's tongue.

Running Deer looked at the drum and turned up his palms. Then he turned to War Pony who still had the cigarette lighter. "Burn'm up, War Pony," he said.

The Seneca was only too eager to use his magic fire maker. He trotted over to the spilled sulphur and knelt and then struck the lighter. The instant the flame touched the sulphur the chemical roared into flames heading for the drum and the building beyond. The Indians leaped out of the way, turned and then ran for safety. As they reached the wire fence and scurried up and over it the way they had come, the building exploded in a great wall of flame and flying sparks. The cries of the men trapped inside were heard as Running Deer and the others vanished along the waterfront, running easily now along the quay toward the city.

When they crossed a bridge and arrived at a hill which led up to a busy highway, the party approached cautiously, readying their lances, bows and arrows upon a signal from Running Deer.

Finally when they arrived at the top of the hill they remained crouching, watching the endless stream of vehicles speed by in both directions. The glare of headlights and red tail lights fascinated them. Occasionally a horn blowing or the screeching of brakes made them scurry for cover, unable to know quite what to do. Once in awhile when a car sped by their place of concealment, something would be hurled out of the windows. An empty milkshake container struck Blazing Arrow on the head, startling him. He let out a war whoop and stood up and shot an arrow at the speeding car. The arrow struck the rear tire and there was a loud bang as the vehicle careened out of control, struck two other cars and then ran off the road onto the shoulder a quarter mile from where the Indians were concealed. Then the car rolled off the shoulder and turned over three times before it came to a stop upside down at the bottom of the gully between the cloverleaf highway levels. At this success, Blazing Arrow whooped in victory. "My brothers! Aim for the wheels!"

With that, the braves began to shoot arrows at the cars and trucks and buses as they sped past. A tractor trailer was the first to be hit when a lance penetrated the right front tire and the rig jackknifed suddenly. Two cars following the tractor trailer plowed into it. A third car jumped the lane when the driver made a vain effort to avoid striking the piled-up cars and was struck broadside by a bus. Two more cars crashed into the rear of the bus. Then a third truck spun out of control and hit a concrete abutment at the side of the highway. Four cars ran into each other trying to avoid the truck and all the traffic came to a tire-screeching halt.

Running Deer, brandishing his tomahawk, let out a yell and went running toward the wrecked cars. A heavyset man came scrambling out of a red sedan just as Running Deer came up beside him. Running Deer struck him across the head and then scalped him. Even as he ripped off the white man's scalp and held it up with another shrill cry of victory, Sharp Tomahawk and the ten other warriors went clambering over the wrecks attacking the drivers and passengers.

Horrified motorists, truck drivers, bus drivers, and passengers looked on in shocked incredulity as they watched the war party drag their victims out of the vehicles and scalp them. In the distance, flashing red lights of police cars and ambulances could be seen almost as soon as their wailing sirens were heard.

At this, Running Deer gave the signal for the warriors to withdraw and they fled to the shadows at the other side of the highway, then running easily, they vanished in the wasteland beyond, moving in single file toward the bright lights of New Orleans.

The war party did not stop until the first gray light of dawn in the east began to streak the horizon. They had skirted the city proper and were in a park of grass meadows and tall trees when Running Deer led them to the top of a bluff where they could hide behind a thicket of dense shrubbery. After they had posted three sentries to guard their encampment, Running Deer and Sharp Tomahawk sat in a circle with the other braves and tallied the scalps they had taken. Standing Wolf, the Comanche, had the most. He had five, including one of long red hair and a second scalp of long platinum blond hair. Redwing traded him four of his short-haired scalps for the long platinum blond one.

Sharp Tomahawk looked around the encampment and nodded approvingly, sniffing the clean air. "The deer and possum come here. Maybe we find buffalo, too."

As though in reply to his observation, the roar of a wild animal was heard somewhere to the west of where they were. The braves fell silent, listening, straining their ears. Spirit Walker stood up and whispered, "I hear the buffalo! It not a big herd. Maybe only a few grazing."

Running Deer gave the signal for the party to leave at once. He led them out of their hiding place, beckoning for the sentries to follow. Then they descended a grassy slope and reached the entrance to the zoo.

"I hear the great bear," Long Feather observed excitedly.

"Forget bear. We only hunt buffalo. Then we go back to camp and wait until sun goes back to the west," Running Deer said.

"Look!" Redwing whispered when they crossed a pavement and passed through a palisade which led to a row of animal cages. "There is mountain lion and bear. There other strange beasts too. Why paleface have'm in pens? Paleface maybe loco. Mountain cat no good eating. Meat tough like moccasin laces of leather."

Cold Wind, who had trotted ahead of the group as scout, came running toward them. He pointed and gestured excitedly. "Buffalo over hill. We get in close and shoot. Wind carry our scent soon when sun rises, so we must hunt now."

Running Deer gave the signal and the Indians began to trot silently along beside him. They crossed a grassy plot and went up a bluff. Running Deer and Cold Wind gave the others a hand signal and they spread out, their bows and arrows at the ready, as they began to descend the hill toward the fenced-in area where the buffalo were.

Running Deer went over the iron railing first and the others followed. He went down an embankment and came up within a few feet of where the animals were standing grazing and moving slowly about. He held up his bow and the others followed suit. Then, he lowered his bow and took aim and fired. The others fired at the same time and the entire herd of seven buffalo was brought down.

Moments later they were upon the beasts, skinning them where they had fallen. Standing Wolf finished his buffalo first and began to roll up the skin while grumbling aloud, "Scraggly thin buffalo. No good for meat. Meat tough and stringy. Leave for vultures."

Running Deer and Sharp Tomahawk concurred. They made swift work of their pelts and then helped the others to finish skinning their animals. When this was done, they went back the way they had come, down the embankment and over the fence and then across the park toward the place where they had camped.

Running Deer and Spirit Walker supervised the tanning of the skins after the others gathered tree bark and mineral salts from near their camp. By noon the task was done and the pelts hung up to cure.

"Now that we got'm buffalo pelts we go east to the Creek people," Spirit Walker said. "In one moon we meet in the land of the Cherokee. When sun goes down in west, my brother, I take Santana, Redwing, Long Feather, Laughing Bear, and Standing Wolf. You, Running Deer, will take Cold Wind, Sharp Tomahawk, Blazing Arrow, War Pony and Gray Eagle with you. This way we move fast through the darkness without danger of Pale Face seeing us."

"And we kill the Pale Face wherever he comes across our path. We will go our separate but together ways like two great armies striking terror and taking scalps."

"This is good," Spirit Walker grunted approvingly. "Our Red Brothers will hear of this over the magic talk box and they will know we have arisen and are on the march. The Palefaces will hear of this too and they will cringe with fear like the yellow chicken cornered by the wolf."

Suddenly, Gray Eagle, who had been on guard, came trotting over and said, "Palefaces come along path at bottom of hill. They ride two wheeled horses."

"Two wheeled horses?" Running Deer frowned. Then he and the others hurried to the edge of the camp where they crouched in the bushes to look down at the white people riding toward them. Five young men and two girls were riding along the path. They slowed down and stopped at a water fountain and then dismounted.

At their first sight of those curious two-wheeled machines the Indians were dumbfounded. But finally it was Long Feather who said, "Iron horses with two wheels. Crazy."

The bicyclers went over to the fountain and pressed the button and a stream of water came forth.

"Ugh!" Running Deer blinked in amazement. "Spring comes from iron fountain!"

"We kill'm white faces," Spirit Walker said. "We take'm scalps and two wheel horses and ride swift and silent to the land of the Creek."

Running Deer consented with a nod. Spirit Walker signaled the braves in his party who were to accompany him and they picked up their bows and arrows. Then they encircled the group below them and took aim. At Spirit Walker's signal, they fired together.

The young people fell dead instantly without knowing what had hit them. But one girl of sixteen who had received an arrow just below her left breast was not dead. She fell but rolled over and when she looked up and saw the six warriors silently running down the hill toward them, she screamed and jumped up and leaped on her bike and before Spirit Walker or any of the others could fire another arrow at her, she was out of sight and out of range going at a breakneck speed down the winding bicycle path.

Spirit Walker and his braves fell to the task of taking the scalps. When this grisly business was finished, he picked up one of the bicycles and tried to ride it, but promptly lost his balance and fell to the path. The braves around him howled with laughter. Furiously, Spirit Walker stood up, held the bicycle up, and then straddled it. He placed his feet on the pedals as he had seen the palefaces do, and then managed to travel a few yards before losing his blanket, arrow quiver and bow, finally falling again. When the braves laughed, he turned and glared at them and then said, "You do'm better—so you ride'm."

At this the other braves picked up the bicycles and wobbled around on them before falling one by one.

This time it was Running Deer and his party who taunted them with derisive laughter.

Determined to ride the two-wheeled horses as the white people had done, Spirit Walker managed to stay erect and ride a few yards more before losing his balance again. He did not dally about, but tried again. Finally, on his sixth try, he had managed the trick of staying on the bike while pedaling the pedals. He steered it around and around in a wide circle. Santana, following his leader's success by watching carefully, was the second brave to learn the trick of it. Redwing, the Apache, not to be outdone by a Creek and a Cayuse, soon bettered them and was able to ride swiftly around them, pedaling and steering with growing expertise.

Five minutes later everyone was able to ride, and finally manage with some degree of agility to follow Spirit Walker and Redwing as they rode up and down the path and over the grassy slopes without losing their balance.

Running Deer and the others descended from the hill and amused themselves at the water fountain. Finally, Running Deer called a halt to the play and stopped Spirit Walker from leading his five braves around the path again by grabbing the handlebars of his bike and holding him still. "White squaw that got away by now tell longknives. We take'm water from iron spring and go, my brother."

"You are wise, Running Deer. We do that. Maybe you catch more white men riding two-wheel iron horses——"

Running Deer held out an empty canteen made from the skin of a wild pig. He took it to the fountain and pressed the button and water spurted forth from the end of the bubbler. Spirit Walker tasted the water and nodded in approval. "Some salt in water but it cool and clean."

When their canteens were filled, they hurried to their bicycles and mounted up. Then Running Deer and his braves touched their breasts with clenched fists and wished them a good journey.

Spirit Walker and his party circled Running Deer and his five warriors and as they rode by, descending to the path which led to the east and Creek country, grinned and saluted them.

"Go with the Great Spirit, my brothers," said Running Deer.

"May he go with you, too," Spirit Walker cried. "We meet again in one moon."

War Pony, who had been standing guard halfway up a great oak tree, came scrambling down, alarm in his voice. "My brothers, the long knives come with the great red eyes blinking atop their chariots and iron horses."

Running Deer gave the signal. They fell into step behind him and vanished in the park, running swiftly in a northerly direction. When they reached a stream, Running Deer led them into it so their tracks could not be found. Then he raced ahead of his warriors, setting a furious pace. Not until they had reached the end of the park did Running Deer lead them out of the stream and across a tract of weeds and scrubby trees. They passed roads and houses but kept hidden, running easily, heads bent low to avoid being seen.

They stopped when they reached a large clearing where workmen were operating large tractors and draglines, leveling the land preparatory to building a housing development. "Monster iron horses!" Sharp Tomahawk exclaimed. "They eat the land and destroy the home of the fox and the bird and duck and rabbit. We kill them!"

Running Deer grunted. He surveyed the area and finally pointed toward a construction shack. "That be where magic fire ropes go in from fire rope poles. See?" he said, showing Sharp Tomahawk and the four others the electric and telephone utility wires. "If'm we kill magic fire ropes first, we then kill iron monster horses and the white men. But we must attack at once and let none escape."

"Ugh," agreed Sharp Tomahawk. "There three iron monsters on field. My braves and I will kill and put War Pony's magic silver fire box to the evil fire water. You cut magic fire ropes and kill any who stay in cabin. Then we burn'm up good. Take all scalps."

Just then a loud whistle was heard blowing. The Indians froze, looking around in wonder and awe. "What kind of wild animal make cry like that?" Cold Wind gasped.

"Look!" Running Deer pointed. "The iron beasts stop and the pale faces dismount. They go to cabin now. See, there be man inside who come out now. White man carry pouch and sit on ground. They eat now. There five of them. We kill them now while they eat and then kill iron beasts and burn cabin."

The five unsuspecting white men sat leaning against the construction shed eating their lunches, impervious to the six braves creeping up behind them. As they ate and drank from bottles of soft drinks, someone turned on a portable radio. The noon broadcast of the news brought grins of amusement to their faces.

"If that ain't the weirdest thing I ever did hear," one man guffawed. "Must be some kind of a gag. Wild Indians going around shooting people with arrows and scalping them. Whoever heard of such a nutty thing——?"

"Last night a whole tribe of them wrecked a dozen cars and trucks out on I-95 and tied up traffic for hours. Killed a lot of people too—scalped them. Arrows were sticking out of tires and convertible tops. A real panic started."

"Yeah, and did you hear the latest bulletin?"

"No? What was that?"

"Six kids out in the park were shot dead by arrows and scalped. A sixteen-year-old girl who got away said that hundreds of Indians had surrounded them and she escaped with an arrow in her side. The cops are combing the park now and they've got it sealed off. They believe they've cornered whoever did that."

"Do you believe that—about Indians——?"

The man's question was never answered. With a loud war whoop, Running Deer and his braves leaped upon them with knives and tomahawks. The white men were killed before they knew what had happened. One man who had tried to put up a fight, then fled when he saw it was hopeless, was brought down with a well-aimed tomahawk thrown by War Pony from sixty paces. The tomahawk cleaved the back of his head in two.

As the braves took their scalps, War Pony and Running Deer set fire to the construction shack and then carrying flaming torches made from pieces of dried timber, they ran out to the iron monsters and ignited them. As they returned to the party, the machinery out on the field blew up and burned, flames and black smoke purling skyward.

"That smoke bring'm more palefaces," Running Deer cautioned the others. "Let us go."

They fell into step after him, racing for the edge of the clearing and a wooded area beyond. Not until they had traveled across two deserted roads and a swamp did they stop running and make camp. Running Deer sent Gray Eagle out to scout the terrain ahead of them and then he and his men sat down to rest and to wait for Gray Eagle's report. "It not wise to travel by day," Running Deer told the others. "From now on we travel by night."

Several hours after they had encamped, Gray Eagle returned at a fast trot. He seemed excited and anxious to break the news of what he had scouted to Running Deer and the others. "My brothers!" he cried as soon as the others looked up when he entered the camp circle, "Not four leagues north I came upon an Indian camp of ten braves and squaws. They are of a strange tribe I do not recognize and they possess iron horses and covered wagons, magic talk boxes and wear strange garments——"

"Did you speak to them?"

"No, Running Deer, my brother. I heard them talk and they speak a patois I did not recognize, though I did understand a few words. They spoke of beautiful things and flowers and the wilderness that the white man has destroyed. They plucked bow strings on shiny boxes and made songs and the squaws went about from brave to brave fondling and kissing them. It was very strange, this tribe's being there, living not in wigwams or wikkiups but in the covered iron wagons of the paleface and the squaws fondling the husbands of the other squaws and speaking when they were not spoken to."

"The braves of that tribe must be as women if they allow that. Good squaws only speak when spoken to."

"Aye, Running Deer. They are long-haired and bearded which is the only way to tell the braves from the squaws. They wear the same leggings and clothes, some of the white man, some of the Indian. One wore buckskins."

"Were they armed?"

"Nay, not that I could see, though they might have lances, bows and arrows in their iron wagons."

"Then we will go and meet this tribe. Perhaps they are lost in the wilderness awaiting us to take them to their brothers." Running Deer arose and the others followed, gathering up their weapons. "We will go to this camp and we will not speak to these strange tribesmen until we have learned all there is to know from them. Perhaps they may have news of our brothers whom we seek."

They set out, following Gray Eagle, running at a fast job. A half-hour later they reached the camp which was located near the edge of a forest glen near a bayou. There they spread out and encircled the camp. Running Deer and Gray Eagle, carrying their weapons slung upon their backs, approached through the shrubbery. They walked with arms folded across their chests toward the encampment. A girl kneeling over a cookpot hanging from a spit above a charcoal fire looked up and saw them. She smiled and held up two fingers in the traditional "V" sign. Both Gray Eagle and Running Deer held up their hands, palms outward.

"Peace," the girl said.

Gray Eagle and Running Deer exchanged puzzled glances. The girl spoke to them in the white man's tongue.

"How," Running Deer said.

"How?" a young man with long flowing hair and a ragged beard replied as he came around one of the campers parked beside the fire. "I'll tell you guys how. First, we kill all the politicians."

"Politicians?" Running Deer repeated, a puzzled expression on his face.

"Yeah, man," the long-haired fellow replied. "They're the cats who start the wars and keep the poor people in poverty."

"Cats?" Gray Eagle said. "Maybe hunt 'em with arrows." He withdrew his bow and an arrow from the quiver upon his back and fitted the arrow into the bow. Taking quick aim, he fired it at a nearby tree. The arrowhead buried into the bark and the feathered shaft quivered.

"Hey, man!" the girl shouted with a gleeful laugh. "That's pretty good."

"What tribe you belong?" Running Deer asked the fellow.

"Tribe? Man, we belong to the tribe of man. Come on fellows, you guys wanna join us?"

"We no join tribe," Gray Eagle said. The haughty Ute was infuriated to think that anyone would have the audacity to actually ask such a thing of one as proud as he.

"Okay, man," the long-haired fellow said. "Come on, have yourselves a plate of pork and beans."

The others came forth to welcome the newcomers. In all, there were five young men and five young girls. They were attired in Indian headbands, black felt hats, Indian blankets, beads, belts, leggings, buckskins, and other associated and assorted trappings.

"We will sit at your campfire and smoke the pipe," Running Deer said. "But we no eat."

The commune members exchanged glances with each other and then looked up in surprise as Sharp Tomahawk, Cold Wind, Blazing Arrow, and War Pony emerged from hiding upon Running Deer's signal and converged on the camp.

"Hey, you guys are sure with it the way you're dressed!" cried a blonde girl who was wearing a tattered loincloth that had once been a calico tablecloth. Around her pale shoulders she wore a Navajo blanket. An Indian bead headband held her hair in place and three plumes protruded from the back of it.

The braves ogled her. Running Deer wondered what she meant. He pretended to understand and led his warriors between the parked campers to the fire.

"You guys look like you've been living off mother earth too long," said one of the men, a tall lean fellow with a shaggy mustache and a scraggly red beard. He was the only one of the men who did not at all look like an Indian. Running Deer disliked him at once, especially when he noticed that the others obeyed him as if he were their leader and spokesman.

"What are you called?" Running Deer asked, his steady dark eyes never for a moment wavering.

"I'm Chief Eager Beaver," the red-bearded one said with a raucous laugh.

This did not go over at all with Running Deer. "You not Indian, you paleface," he said. It was a threat, a statement of fact that sounded just like he was challenging Eager Beaver.

The man stopped laughing. The deadly look in Running Deer's eyes was not to be reckoned with. Still, Running Deer had guessed right. Eager Beaver was the self-proclaimed leader of the hippie commune. The others had given way to him because they were not a violent people and they shunned standing up to him. It was easier to submit than it was to fight. Now, silently challenged before his people, Chief Eager Beaver could only take up the challenge.

"Who might you be?" he demanded, the sneering laugh still on his lips.

"I am Running Deer, son of Great Elk, the chief of all the Choctaw."

"Well lawdy-dawdy, daw! Pleased to meet you. But tell me, who are you running away from, *dearie?*"

It was obvious to Running Deer that the man had disguised his remark as a veiled insult to his good name. He was uncertain of what the words meant exactly, but he *was* certain that the connotation was intended to antagonize him.

Running Deer drew his blade and moved toward him in a crouch.

The red-bearded one laughed and produced a knife from the top of his leggings. "Okay, if fun and games are what you want, I'll accommodate you."

Running Deer watched him, waiting for Eager Beaver to make the first move. He did not have to wait long. Rushing at him, the red-bearded one tried to slash Running Deer's throat, but Running Deer was too quick for him. He bounded out of the way and spun around, burying his own blade deep into Eager Beaver's rump.

The man screamed in pain, humiliation, and outrage. He turned, ignoring his wound now, and charged blindly at Running Deer. With one hand Running Deer disarmed him. With his right, he drove the blade deep into Eager Beaver's stomach and when he extracted it, Eager Beaver was falling to the ground, dying. Running Deer then wiped the blade on Eager Beaver's chest and knelt beside him. He calmly proceeded to scalp Eager Beaver.

The girls and the four young men watching cringed and screamed.

Running Deer looked up at them in surprise. "You call yourselves Indians?"

"Yes, but we've never seen anyone scalped before—though I'm not saying he didn't deserve being killed and scalped," a blonde girl said. "I guess we sort of owe you our thanks, Running Deer, sir. That Eager Beaver was a bad one. He moved in on us and was virtually holding us all captive. We were afraid to run away and afraid to stay."

"Yeah, thanks, man," one of the young men said, "you sure sent him off to his unhappy hunting ground. He said his mother had been a half-blooded Crow. We didn't believe him, though. We've lived out West amongst the Indians for some time and we never met the likes of him before."

"You are not Indian?" Sharp Tomahawk asked in surprise.

"No, we are not," the blonde girl said. We simply wish we were and we admire the Indians of old and detest what our forefathers have done to the great tribes that used to own this country."

Running Deer and Sharp Tomahawk exchanged glances. They nodded to the other braves and seated themselves around the campfire. One of the girls hastened to serve them cool drinks of elderberry juice but the braves tasted it and spat it out.

One of the other young men stepped forward and said, "Hey, you guys wouldn't happen to be that bunch of characters the fuzz are hunting for, would you?"

Running Deer was puzzled. "Fuzz?"

"Hey, man, you sure don't dig, do you?"

"He doesn't know," the blonde girl's eyes contemplated Running Deer and the others with deep concern. "I think they really are Indians and they're runing away from the police."

"Police? What that?" Running Deer asked.

The girl turned again toward the others. "See? What did I tell you? They really *don't* dig. Where did you come from? Where've you been that you don't know what's been going on?"

Running Deer made a gesture, sweeping the horizon with his hand. "We come from far beyond the great sky and the river. We have been away many, many, many moons."

"Then let's split, man!" one of the fellows cried. "The fuzz will be thinking it's us if we're dumb enough to stick around here." He ran to one of the campers and opened the door. "Come on, you guys go with me. The rest of you follow."

"What about Eager Beaver?" someone thought to ask.

"Cover him over with some leaves and let's get going."

Running Deer and the five braves followed the young man into the parked camper. They seated themselves in the back as the young man got behind the wheel beside Running Deer who gingerly sat upon the passenger seat in the front.

"How you drive'm iron horse?" Running Deer inquired.

The young fellow caught himself from asking if this was some kind of a put on. He said, "Well, first you put the key in the ignition?"

"What that?"

Again the fellow caught himself. "This here is a key," he said, holding up the ignition key. "You put it here and you turn. See?" He turned the key in the ignition lock and the starter whirred. The Indians inside the truck went rigid, clutching their knives and tomahawks. Running Deer had his blade pressed against the driver's throat.

"Hey, man!" he cried in terror, "that ain't gonna hurt you. It's the starter, starting the motor." He managed a grin and Running Deer listened and then lowered his blade.

"What you do now?"

"You push in this pedal here and put the stick in first gear. Then you release the brake—this lever here—and then you let out the clutch. You push your foot here and the truck goes. You take your foot off the pedal and the truck comes to a stop. When you want to go faster, you do this." He demonstrated. A few minutes later they rolled onto the highway and turned north.

As they sped along, the Indians peering excitedly out of the windows thoroughly enjoying their first truck ride. Running Deer watched as the driver taught him how to operate the vehicle, the second camper followed closely.

"Where we go now?" Running Deer asked.

"Where you want to go?" the fellow asked.

"To Cherokee and Choctaw country."

"The reservations? Why, they're two hundred miles from here."

"How many day's walk?"

"Four hours' walk," the driver grinned. He was able to understand them now and fear them less, though he was quite terrified and unable to understand where they had come from or who they really were. All he knew was that they were Indians, but when he got quite close to them and saw for himself, he realized there was something inhuman about them—almost ghostly, ethereal. He didn't let himself think about that. Instead, he kept driving northward.

After they had driven along for several miles, he slowed down, heading for an isolated gasoline station on the highway ahead. "Why you stop?"

"Running Deer, sir," the fellow said, "we need gas—stink water that burns—for the engine to run. Engine burns gas and makes it go and wheels go." He stopped and pulled up the brake handle. "You always set the brake when you stop so the thing won't roll away." Then he got out, beckoned for Running Deer to follow, and opened the hood. A service station attendant who had been lubricating a car in one of the bays climbed to his feet and approached. "Fill it up," the fellow said.

The gas station attendant looked at the driver and at Running Deer. He cranked the gasoline pump handle, took the pump off the hook, and then went to the gas tank and removed the filler cap. As he filled the vehicle he kept staring at the Indians inside the camper behind the cab. Finally, when the gas tank was filled, much to the amazement of the watching Indians who couldn't get over that little bell and the numbers that kept clicking around in the dial, he replaced the cap and said, "That's six bucks."

Running Deer immediately drew his blade and went up to the man.

"You spy for long-knives? Why you say we six bucks?"

"I meant—m-money, sir."

"Here is the money," the fellow driving the truck said, trying to laugh it off and put the station attendant at ease.

"What money?" Running Deer asked, still holding his blade against the frightened man's throat.

"Wampum, yes, wampum."

"Give him money and let us go."

They got into the truck after the man accepted the money. The second camper just came into view. It had fallen far behind and was just catching up.

The service station attendant, after his bad fright, was not taking any chances, so he backed away until he had reached the service station and then he ran inside and picked up the telephone.

"What he do in there?" cried Running Deer.

"That's a telephone," said the driver. "He's calling somebody."

"Calling? Me no understand."

"Talky-talk. Voice goes over wires."

At this, Running Deer went charging out of the truck. He reached the service station just as the attendant was saying to someone on the telephone, "Get me the police, quick."

Running Deer stepped forward and ripped the phone out of his hand. He then hurled it through the plate glass window and seized the attendant by the arm and hurled him through it also. Then he proceeded to smash everything in sight as Sharp Tomahawk and War Pony came running up to join in the fun.

"We kill palefaces now?" Sharp Tomahawk asked.

"No, when we learn ride iron horse. Then we kill and scalp'm. Right now we burn place and scalp man who say we six bucks."

"Me no like called a buck," said Gray Eagle. "Me a brave, a warrior, not a buck."

"This white man world crazy place," Running Deer said. "Man talk on magic ropes; call wampum bucks, keep'm mountain lions in pens, throw bad stuff on hunting ground, burn evil spirits you can't breathe, pollute the waters and do all this bad stuff. Gray Eagle, make fire with your silver fire box and burn this stink place to ground."

Gray Eagle, happy to oblige, struck the lighter and touched it to a can of oil. It wouldn't burn and he grew angry, then took his knife and stabbed it. As the oil gurgled out he hurled it aside and then touched the flame to some paper display materials which were in the window. One of the ribbons of paper fell burning to the floor and ignited the oil. At once the place became a smoking inferno.

Giggling and dancing for joy, Gray Eagle ran out of the station and ran toward the gas pump. He picked up one of the hoses and pressed the handle as he had seen the attendant do. Gasoline began to flow out of the hose onto the ground. It ran toward the inferno.

The people in the second camper, upon seeing this, furtively motioned to the young fellow who had been driving Running Deer and the five braves. He slipped away unnoticed and the gas station attendant, seeing this, made a break to escape with them. He reached the camper and climbed in. Just as the flames ignited the running pool of gasoline, they started the camper and roared away, tires screeching.

Running Deer, Sharp Tomahawk, and the others saw this and went running after them. Running Deer stopped them and cried, "We follow in iron horse. I will ride it. Get in, my brothers."

Running Deer turned the key and the engine turned over, jerking the vehicle forward in violent spurts. Then

Running Deer remembered about the clutch and the brake. He released the brake and pushed in the clutch. Then he pushed his right foot down on the gas and let out the clutch. They roared away, careening on two wheels over the nearest curb and then ramming into a gas pump, skidded away and then began to roll toward the nearby highway. By the time Running Deer got the trick of it, the gasoline station behind them was a tower of flame and belching smoke hundreds of feet high in the sky.

"Where we go now?" Sharp Tomahawk asked Running Deer.

Running Deer looked at him and shrugged. "We go north to the land of our fathers."

"Should we not catch the palefaces who pretend they are red man?"

"Let them be," Running Deer said. "They are not evil people as are other white men. Maybe someday we catch them, but now we go north to land of the Choctaw and the Cherokee and all the other tribes."

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Four

By the time Spirit Walker and his five braves rode to the end of the cycle path at the edge of the park, they had mastered the trick of riding their two-wheeled iron horses. But now there was a new problem to be solved. It was that of leaving the park and entering the white man's world by taking to one of his highways in order to travel more speedily to Creek country east of New Orleans. Spirit Walker realized they would be readily spotted and then stopped by the long-knives the palefaces called police. In addition to this, there was the problem of riding their bicycles along with the traffic speeding eastward. They had been scouting the highway going east at the perimeter of the park and had observed no paleface bicycle riders on that road. It was obvious that bicycles were not ridden on such highways since they could not go as fast as the wind and the vehicles in which the palefaces rode.

Redwing, who had been scouting the land several miles east of where Spirit Walker and the others were in hiding at the edge of the road, returned at a fast jog and then settled himself in the midst of his brothers.

"There is big iron horse on side of road around bend. White man is putting round horseshoe on front wheel. Big iron horse is large as the cave of our forefathers who slew the great beasts with tusks like gnarled trees. We maybe go there and hold knife to paleface and make'm take us to Creek village."

"That good idea," Spirit Walker said, arising and signaling the others. They picked up their weapons and bicycles and began to trot after Redwing. A few minutes later they rounded the turn in the road and withdrew to the bushes to observe the white man. He was just turning the last wheel nut into place with a large wrench. Then he turned the jack handle and lowered the truck.

At this the Indians expressed amazement. "How paleface do that? He lift iron horse like it duck feathers."

"That must be iron arm," Santana said. "See it look'm like arm when it turn and muscle rise. Muscle lift, not white man."

The driver then put the tools away in the box above the spare wheel carrier. He then rolled the flattened tire he'd just removed to the side of the truck and with some straining lifted it and slid it into the carrier. When he had finished his task he paused a moment to inspect the tire he'd just put on. As he did so, Redwing and the others crept up behind him.

It was Redwing's blade at his throat that compelled the white man to cry out, "Okay—don't kill me. Whatever you want, I'll do. I ain't no hero. I'm just a poor truck driver."

"Very good, truck driver," Spirit Walker said. "You take'm us in your iron horse to land of the Creek."

"Okay, okay," the man said, his eyes widened in fear and astonishment. "But I don't know where that is."

"It east," Spirit Walker pointed. "We go this way and soon we come to land of my forefathers."

"Sure, man, sure," the driver said. "Tell him to take that knife away from my throat and I'll take you anywhere you want to go."

"Take'm knife away, but watch him," Spirit Walker said.

The man breathed a sigh of relief. He rubbed his throat and then said, "Where is this creek you want to go?"

"Creek country, the land of my people. It is called Chattahoochee."

"Chattahoochee! That's in Florida."

"Me know'm this. Near Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. You take us. We ride in iron covered horse and me, Spirit Walker and Standing Wolf ride'm up front watch'm you."

Santana and the others opened the side door of the van and clambered inside. Spirit Walker paused to look in after them. A large cargo of boxes and cartons were neatly stowed in the rear of the van. Spirit Walker peered at them and then gave Santana and the others a nod, indicating they should open the boxes.

When the driver saw them doing this, he cried out, "Hey, don't do that, it's dangerous. It's acid—sulphuric acid."

"Acid? What is acid?" Santana asked as they lifted their bicycles into the van and the last man climbed up.

"It's a dangerous chemical. It'll burn you like fire."

"What is chem-i-cal?" Spirit Walker asked.

"It's a kind of liquid—watery stuff that burns."

"Fire water!" Santana cried. "You lie. Fire water no dangerous. It good drink."

"Yeah," the truck driver said with an ironic grin. "You just do that—drink it. All of you crazy nuts drink it—but don't blame me for what happens."

"We get'm drunk?" Spirit Walker said, grinning.

The truck driver was desperate. He saw this as an opportunity for escape. "It ain't for drinking," he said. "But don't let me stop you."

Santana and the others got out their knives and began to open the cartons. Lifting out square glass containers of clear liquid, they began to laugh in anticipation of drinking what they thought to be whisky. Even Spirit Walker and Redwing, who had been standing beside the driver, turned their attention to obtaining one of the jugs which Standing Wolf was handing down to them.

The driver, edging away, moved cautiously and slowly toward the front of the truck. He knew that if he tried to turn and run they would kill him with a lance or arrow. There was only one way to escape—and that was to get into the cab and start the truck and drive away—perhaps to the nearest police station. He decided to play it cool and easy. He sauntered over to the open door of the cab and sat down on the running board. Spirit Walker and the others were hacking away at the cork seals of their jugs, their knives making short work of the task.

Standing Wolf got his cork off first and sniffed the chemical. "Ugh," he grunted, "it smells strong like the mountain that breathes fire."

"That good," Redwing laughed. He had been to the southland and had seen the great volcano and had smelled the brimstone and fumes it had emitted. "Powerful medicine water. Give us mighty strength of the great spirits of the mountains."

The truck driver slid behind the wheel of the truck after stealthily climbing into the cab. He reached over and pulled the door shut, holding the handle depressed until the latch caught. Then he locked the doors and rolled up the windows. With a sadistic grin on his face he watched the Indians through the side view mirror as they raised the jugs to their leathery mouths and drank.

A few moments later the braves began to rage and scream as though in terrible agony. Spirit Walker's mouth and face dissolved as the acid did its work. Redwing hurled his jug aside as the chemical destroyed his mouth, lips, and throat and burned into his stomach. The four others in the van leaped down, dropping their jugs. The jugs broke and spilled, splashing the fiery liquid all over them, setting their buckskins afire and searing the flesh from their sinewy leathery bodies. But still they could not die, for they were immortal and could not feel the pain. They could only realize that their bodies were severely injured and their faces hideously marred, mouths burned away, tongues and cheeks dissolved like cadavers in lime pits.

The truck driver did not tarry. He started the engine and began to drive away. Spirit Walker and the others could not cry out or talk, but they were of one mind as they leaped upon the truck and clung to the running board and the open van door. Spirit Walker was the nearest to the cab. He began to pound on the closed safety glass window with his tomahawk, his terrifying half-face now a smoking ruin, his acid-splattered eyes livid as coals.

The truck driver drove madly down the highway, accelerating until he was exceeding ninety miles an hour, weaving through the traffic, avoiding the slow-moving vehicles in his way. He had only one hope now—to attract the highway patrol.

Suddenly the glass on his right shattered and Spirit Walker's slashing tomahawk came through.

The truck driver swerved the truck in an effort to shake him loose, but the Indian clung onto the door. The others were hanging onto the side of the truck and the van door behind.

They sped through a traffic signal, almost colliding with several cars crossing the path of the truck. Horrified motorists gasped and pointed as the big tractor trailer truck barreled by, the hideously disfigured Indians clinging to it.

Again the tomahawk slashed at the truck driver and again he swerved from lane to lane. Suddenly, Spirit Walker managed a handhold on the inside of the door and began to climb through. The truck driver turned, one eye on the road ahead, the other on the savage coming at him. He kicked at Spirit Walker with his boot, but this only infuriated the Indian more than ever. Spirit Walker drove his tomahawk blade into the truck driver's leg. Blood spurted and the truck driver screamed in pain.

He swerved the truck again and drove dangerously near a bridge abutment at the right. He hoped to graze it and knock the Indians off the side of the truck. But before he could manage this, Spirit Walker was inside wrestling the white man to one side. A powerful blow of the tomahawk and the truck driver's skull was cleaved in two.

The truck roared along the bridge at top speed, the dead driver's foot wedged firmly against the gas pedal. Spirit Walker grasped the steering wheel as he had seen the driver do and discovered how the vehicle was guided along the road. He growled in anger and pleasure as he wheeled the huge truck by several slow-moving vehicles and then sideswiped a passenger car, sending the vehicle off the road into a ditch where it rolled over and over, spilling the passengers out and erupting into flames.

"Eeeeyah!" Redwing screamed through his still smoking destroyed mouth. He edged through the broken window and joined Spirit Walker in the front of the truck, taking his bow and affixing an arrow to it. As they drove by a bus Redwing let the arrow fly. It plunged into the back of the driver and the bus went out of control, crashing into a truck. Then both wrecked vehicles careened across the median strip and plunged into other cars and trucks going in the opposite direction. Flames and black smoke roared skyward and still the runaway truck sped along the road.

Unable to speak, Redwing asked Spirit Walker by making hand signals and grunting whether he could stop the truck.

Spirit Walker shrugged and said he didn't know how.

Redwing then began to pull the knobs on the dashboard as he had once seen a paleface do as they sped by him. The windshield wipers went on. The throttle was pulled completely out and the truck began to go faster than before.

Redwing struggled to drag the dead white man out of Spirit Walker's way so he could continue driving without being hampered. He finally pulled him to the side and then dumped him out of the cab where the body fell into the path of a gasoline tank truck. The driver of the truck swerved his rig hard to the right in a vain effort to avoid striking the body. His vehicle jack-knifed from the sudden maneuver and careened off the highway shoulder onto a high tension wire tower. It exploded upon impact and gasoline-fed flames cannonaded upward and in every direction. They ignited the wires above which began to snap and fall as the tower crumpled. A forest at the edge of the road caught the blaze. Before the speeding truck vanished over a hump in the road, flames were raging out of control for a quarter mile in every direction behind it.

Impervious to what had happened, Spirit Walker and Redwing, intent upon steering the wild-running iron monster, continued to sideswipe vehicles they passed along the road.

In the van behind, Standing Wolf, Laughing Bear, Long Feather, and Santana amused themselves by hurling the jugs of acid and other cargo out upon the highway at the vehicles they narrowly missed.

When the van was empty, they hurled their bicycles out. One small sedan struck a thrown bicycle and rolled over in the ditch, hurling its occupants out onto the road.

A pursuing highway patrol car was gaining on them, the two officers in the vehicle frantically radioing ahead for a roadblock and firing shots at the tires of the runaway truck.

Santana, sitting cross-legged on the tailgate of the truck, opened fire with his arrows. Finally one of his arrows pierced the windshield and shattered the glass. Then the other warriors began to fire arrows at the police car. One arrow struck the driver. He slumped dead across the steering wheel and crashed into a tree, hurling the other officer through the windshield.

They continued their erratic drive eastward along the four-lane highway separated by a median strip, sideswiping vehicles of all kinds as they passed. Redwing, peering through the windshield at the countryside, noticed an airport they were approaching. He grunted and made hand signals, informing Spirit Walker.

Spirit Walker grunted and nodded, holding the steering wheel firmly as he drove the truck between two passenger cars which were blocking the road ahead. The cars, swerving out of the way, skidded right and left and piled up after rolling over and over. The one on the left jumped the median strip and plowed head on into a bus. Bodies and debris spewed forth over the highway which other following cars could not avoid striking. A massive pile-up took place and several vehicles burst into flames.

A few minutes after this, sirens were heard closing in on them, approaching at speeds in excess of a hundred miles per hour. Redwing turned and looked back. He made hand signals again, informing Spirit Walker that the long-knives were in pursuit.

When the police cars drew within range, they opened fire. Bullets ripped into the truck and several of the braves in the rear were injured, but as before, they did not bleed or suffer their wounds except to continue as before, firing their arrows and hurling their lances at the police cars. A bullet blew out one of the rear tires of the van. The vehicle began to slow down as the tire ripped to shreds and began to fly off the racing wheel, but still the truck barreled down the highway.

Another bullet shot out a tire on the other side and the truck van began to whip back and forth, right and left, across the highway. Standing Wolf, who had fired all the arrows in his quiver, angrily threw his bow, then his tomahawk at the pursuing squad car nearest them. The tomahawk found its mark, crashed through the windshield and glanced off the officer's head. The car spun around and the two following police cars, unable to get out of the way in time, crashed into it. Wreckage exploded and bodies were hurled onto the highway.

Unable to keep the vehicle on the road as before since the tires in the back were shot out, Spirit Walker and Redwing fought to hold the steering wheel steady. They jumped the median strip and began to careen the wrong way down the highway. A small coupe skidded out of their path. The right front fender struck its right side and the vehicle plummeted over and over, killing the driver and passengers instantly.

Once again the runaway truck began to plunge across the highway. This time it jumped the strip, crossed the two lanes, knocking a dump truck to one side as the front bumper glanced against its truck bed, and then it rolled down a gulley and across a field toward a large group of buildings which housed a power-generating plant. The truck engine began to cough and miss as it careened into the first building and then rolled to a stop against an iron gate which was plowed down before it.

Spirit Walker, Redwing and the others leaped down, brandishing knives and tomahawks. Several workmen and guards, stunned by the sudden appearance of the truck and the war party, began to run. The braves went off in pursuit, bringing each man down and scalping him. Finally, they regrouped and upon hearing the sound of sirens approaching, they looked to Spirit Walker who tried to speak, but could not voice more than a grunt. Spirit Walker told them with hand signals that they must follow him and do as he did. The Indians fell into step behind him as Spirit Walker raced into the power plant. When two guards stepped out from behind reception desks, drawing their pistols in an effort to stop them, Spirit Walker threw his knife and brought one man down. The second man got off a shot before Redwing's blade severed his throat. Then they took their scalps and raced into the building proper, entering the large transformer area where great transformers several stories high hummed monotonously.

Spirit Walker looked up at the immense machinery and signaled the others that they had to kill the beasts. He had seen the great cables of high tension wires entering and leaving the building and had reasoned that this was where the white men made the fire for their magic ropes.

Long Feather and Laughing Bear began to climb two vertical ladders leading to the top of the equipment. When they were at the very top, Long Feather reached across the steel scaffolding and went hand-over-hand to the nearest generator. When he had landed atop it, he took his tomahawk and began to chop at the cables attached to it. One cable broke free and blue flames sputtered from it. It fell like a living whip toward the other generator. Laughing Bear found a coil of wire and, using it like a lariat, caught the broken electric cable. He began to draw it up until it was within reach. Then he seized it and put the sputtering end against the wires on his generator. At once the generators shorted out and the whirring ground to a halt. Suddenly there was a small explosion followed by a series of other explosions as the dials and switches lining the walls began to short out and burn.

Then Spirit Walker signaled his braves to follow him. Laughing Bear and Long Feather slid down the scaffolding and fell into step after them. They raced through the building and just as they reached the front doorway, saw a number of police cars converging on them, red lights whirling and sirens screaming. Spirit Walker gave the signal and his braves began to run behind him, circling the buildings and heading for a wooded area beyond. They reached the safety of the forest a few moments later and then stopped a moment to palaver. Spirit Walker grunted to catch their attention and then, using hand signals, told them they were going to backtrack to the place where they had seen the great iron birds descending and ascending in the skies. There, he told them, we will catch one of the iron birds and fly to the land of our forefathers in it.

All heads nodded in agreement. Their scarred and disfigured faces seemed to smile as they fell into step again behind Spirit Walker and Redwing as they ran through the forest toward the airport.

As they retraced their journey, following now on foot just out of sight of the highway they had traveled so madly in the runaway truck, they saw huge billowing clouds of smoke and flames blackening the horizon as far as their eyes could see. They had done their work well and were pleased that they had destroyed so many palefaces and their iron horses.

Fifteen minutes later they reached the perimeter of the airfield and once again hid behind the shrubbery in order to scout the area. Redwing noticed a sign and pointed to it, asking with his hand signals what the writing meant.

Spirit Walker, who had a scant knowledge of the white man's written tongue, peered at it with uncertainty. "SAC," he made the gesture indicating a pouch or basket. "It mean where U. S. Government long-knives keep thunderballs and bullets in great baskets." This he told them with his gestures.

Redwing grunted and waved his bloodied tomahawk in the air, pointing toward a large B-52 bomber which was taxiing to the end of the runway near the place where they lay hidden behind a high barbed-wire fence.

Spirit Walker held up a hand for their attention and pointed at a distant red light which could be seen from the tallest of the buildings a mile away at the other end of the airport. The light turned green and the B-52 turned into the runway, its great engines roaring, and took off, leaping into the sky within moments of attaining airspeed.

A second B-52 rolled onto the apron and turned, waiting for instructions from the tower.

Spirit Walker signaled his braves. "Iron bird wait for green light. Then it fly away into sky. We climb fence and hide until next iron bird come, then we go in belly door and fly away. Agreed, my brothers?"

Everyone made hand signals that showed agreement. Then Spirit Walker approached the fence stealthily and scaled it. He stood up on the top to avoid catching his limbs in the barbed wire and jumped down to the other side. The others followed. When they were on the other side, Spirit Walker led them to the edge of the field where they crouched behind a huge runway marker in the shape of an arrow.

Redwing noticed that the marker was shaped like an arrow. He gestured until he had their attention and said, "It is good omen. We ride arrow to the land of our forefathers."

As the B-52 got the green signal and took off, a third plane taxied into position. The moment it stopped, Spirit Walker motioned for his braves to follow and they ran across to the belly door which was still open. Spirit Walker leaped up and seized it, then pulled himself in. The face of a startled airman appeared for an instant in the doorway but a moment later it was a blur of gore and blood as Spirit Walker's tomahawk found its mark. Spirit Walker then pushed the dead man's body out, and gave a hand to each of the five braves crouching under the door, helping each aboard. Once they were inside, Redwing pulled the door shut and Spirit Walker held a finger up to his hideous gaping mouth. "Silence, my brothers," he told them with sign language. "We will strike when the iron bird is in the sky. Then we will fly it to the land of our forefathers."

The plane, upon the signal from the tower, turned and headed down the runway, gathering speed. It leaped easily into the air and, a moment after, the sound of the wheels retracting was heard. Spirit Walker and the others peered through the windows in the compartment where they were standing, amazed at the diminishing size of the earth below.

Spirit Walker then motioned for the others to follow and, leading them forward, stepped through a doorway where two surprised crewmen wearing breathing apparatus and earphones looked up and stared.

The braves attacked before the men could give the alarm. Then they moved forward to the next compartment.

Redwing peered curiously at the red and yellow emblems which seemed to be emblazoned everywhere. "What mean this?" he questioned Spirit Walker with hand signs.

"It mean," Spirit Walker replied with finger gestures, "danger. Word say what I no understand. R-a-d-i-o-activity. Fissionable materials. Fish, maybe?"

The Indians peered curiously at the nuclear bombs and followed Spirit Walker through the compartment into the next, the navigator's. The man was seated behind a small desk before an array of instrument dials and apparatus and did not notice the Indians entering. He was struck down with a single blow from Redwing's tomahawk. Then he was dragged bodily aside as Laughing Bear amused himself by pushing the buttons and striking his knife handle against the red and green flashing lights, smashing them one by one and laughing gutturally as the sparks flew.

A man emerged from the forward compartment. It was the co-pilot, running aft to find out what had gone haywire in the navigator's station. He screamed once but the sound died in his throat as Long Feather's blade severed his windpipe.

Spirit Walker and Redwing stepped over the dead man's body and entered the pilot's compartment. The man looked around, horror in his expression.

Spirit Walker grunted and indicated for him to turn the plane due east. The pilot shook his head and cried, "I can't turn. We're on automatic pilot. We're——"

The blade pressed against his throat silenced him. Spirit Walker stepped over the co-pilot's seat and sat beside the pilot, his macabre face leering. He pointed east and pushed Redwing's knife blade away from the pilot's throat.

The pilot pulled the lever taking the plane out of automatic pilot and grasped the wheel, banking the aircraft gently until the nose was heading east. Spirit Walker grinned. He grunted again and gestured something the pilot could not understand. He cried, "I don't know what you want. We're going east. We're above Birmingham——"

Redwing, fascinated by a red lever above their heads which was locked by a device marked "failsafe," hacked at it with his tomahawk.

"Don't do that!" the pilot screamed. "That'll trigger the H-bomb!"

"Arrgh!" Spirit Walker cried, making the hand symbols to ask what an H-bomb was. "Argh!"

Redwing jerked the lever and twisted it. Suddenly there was a great shrieking sound as the bomb bay doors opened.

Frightened, Redwing twisted the handle the other way and the doors jammed.

"My God," the pilot screamed, pointing at a flashing red dial before them, "the bomb's jammed and it's been triggered! You dummies—you triggered the hydrogen bomb! Eight, seven, six, five—it's too late—three, two, one—zero!"

A great blinding flash, a fireball of raging fire, erupted in the skies above Birmingham, Alabama.

Five

Julie looked at Eric with an anguished expression contorting her lovely face. The news had been too unbearable, too incredible to be true. Yet it was actually happening. Since early that morning they had been in the Pentagon ward room waiting to confer with the chiefs of staff concerning what they knew about the state of national emergency which had just been declared by the President of the United States.

Ever since the sabotage of the Strategic Air Command bomber which had blown up at 36,000 feet above Birmingham, Alabama, destroying that entire section of the state together with entire communities and cities in Georgia, Tennessee, and Mississippi when the H-bomb had exploded, bedlam had broken loose in the nation. Newspapers and television stations proclaimed that an invasion was underway in which hundreds, perhaps thousands and even tens of thousands of unknown invaders had unleashed a reign of terror in the South and were making their ways north. According to the reports, entire states were blacked out when power plants had been methodically destroyed and communications systems sabotaged. Reliable sources reported that the unknown invaders had encamped in the parks of the big cities and after butchering the animals for food, had set out openly, killing, maiming, and mutilating hundreds of innocent people. In Louisiana and Mississippi, open warfare was fought on the highways in which hundreds of trucks, buses, private cars, and police vehicles had been wrecked and blown up. Innocent people had been slain without reason and their bodies mutilated. According to some commentators this was a form of psychological warfare in which it was hoped that the soft-bellied citizens of the United States would be terrorized into submission when the main forces of the invading armies landed.

Panic had gripped the nation and people were barricading themselves in apartment buildings and homes everywhere. Those residing in the areas where the gigantic fireball had been seen, ranging from New York and Illinois to as far west as Oklahoma and Nevada and as far southeast as Miami, the Bahamas, and points further south, had taken to the roads and highways carrying all their belongings in a frantic effort to escape the radioactive fallout which was beginning to rain down upon them. As a result, the highways were choked and stranded motorists were abandoning their vehicles and taking to the fields and forests. Some armed bands of citizens had embarked upon self-proclaimed "vigilante posses" and were raiding the offices of liberal newspapers and broadcasting stations, claiming that the nation was being attacked by Communists encouraged by the liberals. Fire bombings were rampant and the police and fire departments were helpless to cope with so many holocausts burning out of control. Ghetto residents in most big cities in the thirty states whose skies had been lit up by the H-bomb explosion were rampaging, looting, breaking windows, overturning cars, smashing every shop window and helping themselves to whatever they liked.

Because of the clogged highways and roads and the unavailability of troop transport helicopters and aircraft, the national guard units called into service were unable to get to the places of disorder in time to quell the disturbances. Overcrowded hospitals and inadequate first-aid facilities left countless hundreds of injured people without medical attention. Many were dying, they imagined, from the fallout and countless thousands in the areas leveled by the H-bomb blast were in need of plasma and medical assistance.

Eric Douglas paced the floor of the expansive deserted room before the great wall charts and the relief maps of the United States, his footsteps echoing hollowly. He had just told Julie to keep quiet about the Indians she claimed she had seen in the kiva beneath the burial mound and Julie had just told him he wouldn't *dare* try to hush her up about such a thing. They had been waiting for nearly three hours to meet with the people from the Office of Federal Security, Eric's branch of civilian service, and he had been requested to bring Julie along because she had been in the vicinity when the strange attacks upon U.S. citizens had begun with the murders of the three professors.

"How can *you* stand there like that and ask me to keep such a thing quiet?" she cried, her fists clenched into bloodless knots of flesh and gristle at her sides. "You positively infuriate me, Eric! The man who's supposed to be in love with me—telling me to keep quiet about such a thing. You know I can't do that. I know what I know—and one thing's certain—there isn't any grandiose all-out attack upon this country and you know it. It's just a dozen Indians——"

"One hundred forty-two-year-old Indians!" he cried, waving both hands in furious dismay and disgust. "Indians who've been dead for over one hundred and forty years, now coming back to life like zombies or warriors who sprang up from the ground after dragon's teeth were sown—aw, Julie, get down off that cloud and come back to earth. Who's going to believe a weird yarn like that? Do you know what they can do to you for coming up with such a nutty story? They'll toss both of us in padded cells and throw away the keys."

"I don't care," Julie said. "It's the truth and I've the documented evidence to support what I say."

"Those pictures—documented evidence? All right, have it your way. Go on and tell them. They'll laugh you right out of here and me with you."

"Eric, please use your head. I know what I saw and I know what was found—and not found—in that kiva. You saw the Indian parchment and you helped interpret it yourself. You also saw Dr. Phillips' body—his scalp taken —his heart gouged out of his chest cavity——"

"Makes no difference. Those killings and suicide had nothing whatsoever to do with it—with what's been going on. All those highway murders—the H-bomb blast —the power plants being sabotaged. You attribute all that to a dozen resurrected savages who've been dead for over a hundred and forty years?"

"Yes," she stated flatly. "As a matter of fact I think they are the ones who did all that—and there is no conspiracy or wholesale alien invasion as some newspapers would have you believe."

"Julie," Eric said with a sigh of disgust. "For Heaven's sake, be reasonable and listen. You can't stand here before all those generals, admirals, and chiefs of staff and presidential advisers and tell them such a harebrained story and I can't be a party to such a thing."

"All right, then suppose you disclaim any responsibility for what I shall have to say."

"I'll do that."

"And what will *your* story be?"

He smiled. He leaned against the edge of the conference table on the dais in front of the huge wall maps and folded his arms across his chest. "Julie, I'm going to tell them exactly what I saw and what I did. Nothing more. I shall make no mention whatsoever of your nutty theory or anything concerning it. Is that perfectly clear?"

She exhaled. "You're going to tell them about my radio call to you—how you flew down in your helicopter to the excavation and when you arrived you saw the three dead men the sheriff's department was investigating—and you're going to tell them about the empty grave mounds inside the kiva——"

"I'll mention it, of course. But I draw no conclusions. What I shall state are merely the facts."

"And what about the parchment?"

"What about it?"

She pulled one of the 8x10 photograph enlargements from the folder she was holding and held it up, smiling without amusement but with defiance in her manner. "Of course, you will not deny the fact that we discovered this pegged to the kiva wall?"

"No, of course not," he said. He felt the hostility she seemed to exude and it distressed him. Although he did not want at this time to further alienate Julie from himself, he could not prevent it. She just would not see things as he did. She just would not realize that men used to dealing in cold, hard facts would scoff at her ridiculous theory. He could not understand this impractical mental outlook of hers which seemed contrary to everything she stood for as a scientist and archaeologist. As an assistant professor of archaeology at one of the world's leading universities, Julie could ill afford to foster theories such as she proposed—especially in a time of dire national emergency.

"Very well, my darling," she said in that tone which indicated the degree of chagrin she now felt. With that, she returned the photograph to the envelope and took a seat in one of the chairs at the great conference table.

A few minutes elapsed. Finally, the door at the far end of the room opened and two uniformed sentries appeared, snapping to attention, their white-gloved hands at their sides, holster high. A moment after, a procession of top brass began to file inside. Several of the men, an admiral and a gray-haired stooped man in a pinstriped suit, nodded at Eric by way of greeting. They took seats at the table, glancing curiously at Julie and giving her grave smiles of greeting and polite nods. In all, thirty-seven men were finally seated at the table. Some of them were four-star generals and gold-braided admirals; others were men Julie had seen on television and in the papers—heads of this arm of the Government or that. No one smiled. Everyone seemed on edge, tense, anxious. Finally, the secretary made his entrance, flanked on either side by uniformed attachés carrying slim briefcases. He took his seat at the head of the table and said, "Gentlemen and lady, shall we begin?"

One of the aides stood up and read from a printed sheet which was stamped in large red letters "Top Secret." He read off the date and then stated: "At approximately 0730 hours forty-eight hours ago, special investigator Eric Douglas was at the scene where the first unexplainable occurrence took place in the Bayou LaFourche, six miles south of the town of Cut Off in the state of Louisiana. Mr. Douglas has made these facts known to this board of inquiry and has voluntarily come here in the company of his fiancée, Miss Julie Chambers, professor of archaeology, who has also voluntarily consented to give testimony before this board." The aide curtly put aside his papers and waved a hand at the chair before the table. "Mr. Douglas, if you will kindly sit there where all the members of the board will be able to see you and question you."

Eric Douglas took the chair and was sworn in. He spoke up clearly, giving his name, governmental affiliation and classification, and serial number. Then he stated that on a morning two days previously he was awakened by a radioed phone call from Julie Chambers' mobile station. He explained that he and Julie had been engaged but had postponed their marriage due to conflicts in their respective careers. Then he stated quite clearly the facts as he knew them—the arrival on the scene at the Indian mound just as the deputies were removing the three dead bodies of Julie's associates who had died of unnatural causes. He also stated the official position the sheriff's department had taken. The three professors had found the underground kiva beneath the mound and certain other historic artifacts that made the discovery one of major significance to the worlds of archaeology and anthropology. Then the three professors had a falling out about who was to receive the official credit for having made the discovery. They argued with growing vehemence whether it was to be officially recorded in the annals of archaeology that the find would be named the Phillips Mound, the Ferguson Mound, or the Gonzalez Mound. But when an agreement could not be reached reasonably, they came to physical violence and then a knife was used as well as a pistol, though no one was shot. As to who struck the first blow, that could not be determined. However the fact remained that the three men had died of knife wounds and Dr. Phillips had been mutilated as well. This latter fact could not be explained, though the deputies were still working on a theory that should clear it up too. Officially the case was now closed, termed to be a double murder and suicide.

When he was finished testifying, one of the four-star generals leaned forward and inquired, "Mr. Douglas, do you have personal knowledge of the sabotage that occurred on the morning in question shortly following your arrival?"

"No, sir," Eric said. "I overheard some radioed reports on the deputies' car receivers and the deputy in charge told me that he was in a hurry to investigate some strange goings-on at the northern part of the bayou. He said power lines were down and a remote microwave transmitting station had been vandalized or sabotaged."

"Was there anything else? Do you have personal knowledge of anything further which may serve to enlighten this board of inquiry? We understand that your fiancée, Miss Chambers, has stated quite emphatically——"

"Please, General," Eric said abruptly, "I have stated the facts as I know them. For me to refer to Miss Chambers' testimony would be to offer hearsay evidence. I respectfully surrender this chair to Miss Chambers and I warn you gentlemen that what she is about to say may not at first seem to be entirely believable. However, I respectfully suggest that you hear her out. Her theory is not totally unfounded and has certain merits."

Julie smiled demurely at Eric as he held the chair for her. "Thank you, my sweet," she whispered, settling herself and sitting primly, the envelope on her lap.

After she had been sworn and had stated her name, title, affiliation, age, and experience in her field for the record, the secretary leaned forward, his hands folded before him and asked, "Miss Chambers, will you kindly begin, stating all the pertinent facts as you witnessed them? As you know we're trying to get at the bottom of this matter of national security in order to determine whether or not we are faced with an invasion of alien forces from a foreign power or if we are confronted by a massive subversive movement of anarchists from within."

"Mr. Secretary, gentlemen," she said. "I am a scientist in my fields of anthropology and archaeology and not given to making rash statements I cannot support without documented evidence. However, what I am about to relate to you may sound a bit far-fetched and unbelievable, but I beg you to hear me out and consider what I have to say.

"First, I should like to state that I do *not* believe—and I shall support this belief with photographic evidence—that we are facing as a nation some major invasion by terrorists or Communists or whatever. Distorted facts reported to the news media by irresponsible people have led to the wholesale panic and rioting now sweeping our major cities in the Southern states. How did all this come about? A good question which I am about to answer. But first I shall begin at the very beginning. As you may know, there has been much controversy about what to do about the many Indian tribes in the country ever since the white man landed and began to settle on these shores. Every time when there seemed to be equitable agreement on the part of the white man and the Indian, it was the white man who reneged on his treaties and promises and compelled the Indian to move further and further inland to smaller and smaller reservations or lands. On the fateful day of May 30, 1830, a terrible thing was approved by President Andrew Jackson which was adopted by the Congress. It was called the Indian Removal Act and that eventually forced the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, Seminoles, and other tribes living in the Atlantic and Gulf States off the lands ceded to them. The Seminoles fought and retreated to the Everglades where they resisted from 1835 to 1842 at a cost to the United States of more than 1,500 lives and untold thousands of casualties and many millions of dollars. The other tribes, driven from their lands by cannon and bayonet, only resisted passively. The Great Lakes tribes and the Ohio River tribes were also driven out of their lands and were moved. The Ottawas, Potawatomies, Shawnees, Kickapoos, Winnebagoes, Wyandots, Delawares, Peorias, the Fox, the Sauk, and the Miamis were all sent to forbidding lands west of the Mississippi.

"When this great exodus took place, and the Indian chiefs saw the hopelessness of trying to actively resist against the white man, especially after the Sauk and the Fox Indians were slaughtered by the thousands when they made their valiant last stand against the overwhelming firepower and numbers of the white man, they found hope only in looking forward to a time in the future—as most defeated and oppressed peoples will do to keep up their morale—when they would rise up again and reclaim what was rightfully theirs. In order to implement this dream a council of fourteen nations was called. Presiding were the great chiefs and shamans or medicine men from each nation." Julie paused and withdrew several large photographs from the envelope she was holding on her lap. "This shows that great council and lists the names of each chief present. We have known of this secret meeting for many decades, but no one—no white man—has ever seen documented proof of it." She passed the photos to the aide who in turn handed them to the Secretary.

"When the great mound was discovered last week in the Bayou LaFourche in Louisiana, as three researchers and myself were examining the find and excavating the ruins surrounding it, we came upon a hidden secret tunnel which led to a great kiva or underground room. During the interval when the tunnel and the kiva were discovered, before we had a chance to systematically document and photograph and take soil samples and carbon-dating samples of the tunnel, Dr. Phillips, my immediate superior, entered the kiva. His body was found later, the heart having been removed after he'd been scalped."

"Scalped?" astonished voices inquired.

"Yes. We were to enter as a group the following morning, but Dr. Phillips went in on his own. Later, after I discovered what I suspected—that gas of some sort—methane or something in the methane family was present—I put on a gas mask and went in. I found the bodies of Drs. Phillips, Gonzalez, and Ferguson, the researchers who were working the digs with me. I also saw what I thought at first were the mummified remains of three men. One was a medicine man and the other two were Indian braves. Additionally, around the room in a semicircle were fourteen opened burial mounds which later investigation revealed had been unearthed not from without—but from within!"

"Young lady!" the Secretary cried. "Are you saying that the fourteen burial mounds you saw were those of dead Indians who had been *resurrected* to life?" He turned, grinning, and glanced round at the others.

"Yes, sir," Julie said. "Now if you'll please bear with me, note the parchments here which I've carefully photographed. These scrolls which were found on the walls in the kiva we unearthed tell the entire story. You may have them translated by your people at the Smithsonian or wherever you like, and you will discover that they will give you the same answer." She handed the photographs to the aide who in turn passed them to the Secretary. The Secretary passed the other photographs she had previously given him to a gold-braided admiral seated beside him.

"These Indian documents reveal," Julie explained, "that the primitives had a secret method of hibernating human beings. It was done either by drugs or gas like methane in underground pockets or else by a combination of both. According to this, they appointed one Father Chitimacha, a well-known shaman of the Chitimacha Wolf Warriors, to take charge of fourteen of their bravest, most daring warriors who would be removed to a secret place where the white man would not find them. There they would sleep the 'long sleep' during which time Father Chitimacha would stay with them guarding them, and marking each 'moon' or month they were sleeping the long sleep by making a flint-head arrow. It was written that they would remain interred in their tomb of the living for many decades until such time as the white man found them and disturbed their resting place. At this time, according to the prophecy, they would arise after Father Chitimacha sowed their graves with magic seeds. Then they would go out to the lands occupied by their descendants and during this journey, would herald their resurrection by leaving a path of terror, killing the white man and taking his scalp and by burning, destroying, and doing all the destruction they could do. Upon reaching the reservations they would call a great council of war and all the nations of the red man would rise up in one massive army and attack the white man, driving him from their hunting grounds forever."

"Young lady," the Secretary cried in an agitated tone, "Certainly you aren't serious——?"

"I'm afraid I was never more serious. You see, what the papers and the television broadcasters have been claiming was a full-scale invasion is only the work of a small war party of a dozen resurrected warriors."

"I can't believe that," the Secretary said, turning and staring at the others on the board of inquiry. "It's too fantastic—too far-fetched——"

"Is it?" Julie asked. "Is it not true that every one of the persons who've been killed were slain by primitive weapons such as arrows, lances, and tomahawks?"

There was no reply. The chiefs of staff and the Secretary exchanged grave glances. Finally the Secretary said, "We neither confirm nor deny this." He lowered his gaze to the photographs before him of the parchment scrolls, cleared his throat, then said, "Of course, this is merely a theory of yours. We've got to look into this further. Perhaps have the photographs confirmed and dispatch a team of investigators to this newly discovered mound in the bayou. In the meantime, have you anything further to add? Did you personally see any of these so-called resurrected Indians coming to life?"

Without hesitation, Julie looked around at them and said, "Yes, I did. When I entered the kiva after I found my dead colleagues and before the police came and removed the bodies, I saw the mummified remains of what I took to be a medicine man and two warriors. Later, when I was sitting by the window inside my camper after I'd radioed the police, I saw that same medicine man and two warriors leaving the mound through the tunnel. One warrior hobbled as though he'd been injured. The other man seemed to be moving very slowly, too, as they helped the medicine man find his way. They appeared to be leading the medicine man as if he were blind or something, though I couldn't be sure. They went across the excavation site at the base of the mound which is some forty feet high and disappeared in the bayou."

"You reported this to the police?"

"Yes, sir," Julie said, looking down at her hands briefly, a slight smile of embarrassment on her lips. "They didn't believe me. They said I was suffering from shock, but that isn't so. I've seen many horrible things during the years I've been in archaeology and I've spent many a lonely month out on the prairie or in some ruin deep in a jungle so I'm not quite the type that frightens easily or is prone to imagine things."

The Secretary smiled and nodded. "Thank you very much, Miss Chambers. It was gracious of you voluntarily to appear before this board. You may go now. If we need you for anything further, we'll contact you through Mr. Douglas."

Julie arose hesitantly. She stepped down from the witness chair and went around the table. Eric nodded at her and said, "Wait for me outside, darling."

Feeling a little foolish because she so strongly sensed she had not been believed, Julie nodded in deference to Eric's request. She realized now he had been right. She regretted having testified and she knew that it had all been a waste of time. She only hoped that Eric wouldn't suffer because of it and that he'd understand she had to do it. As she was ushered out of the room by one of the armed guards, she caught a glimpse of Eric resuming the witness seat.

"Gentlemen," he said when she was gone, "I apologize for the bizarre theory Miss Chambers put before you and I assure you that it was in no way officially sanctioned—"

"Mr. Douglas," the Secretary said in a grim tone, "perhaps when this state of national emergency has been resolved and the insurrection or whatever it is is put down, this board may have ample time to look into Miss Chambers' rather novel theory. In the meantime, I should like to inquire *how* she knew that the casualties were induced by primitive weapons?"

"I didn't know that either," Eric said, a little surprised at the revelation.

"It's been kept hush-hush," the Secretary said. "There isn't any point in creating more of a panic in the streets than that which already has been made."

"You mean all those people were really killed by bows and arrows and tomahawks?"

"Yes," the Secretary said. "But we have a valid theory about that. We feel that the invaders entered this country via commercial airlines within the past few days or weeks. As you know, the weapons-detection devices installed at each airport would render it totally impossible for alien invaders to smuggle weapons into the United States; therefore, we are of the opinion that they have been using primitive weapons to begin their reign of terror and possibly divert our military away from guarding the borders because they have to deal with the insurrection in the towns and cities. When this is done, they undoubtedly will invade the country by parachute drops or sea and air landings with ample logistics and weaponry to mount a full-scale military offensive."

Eric whistled under his breath. As he glanced around he saw the heads nodding around the table, expressing belief in the theory the Secretary had just expounded.

Then the Secretary looked up at Eric again. He held a sheaf of papers in front of him. "Mr. Douglas, I've just been glancing through your service record and I am pleased to say we're quite impressed by your accomplishments in serving our country. In view of this we're placing you in charge of a network of undercover operatives whose task it will be to ferret out the alien invaders and attempt to establish an intelligence clearing house. You will have carte blanche freedom and a blank checkbook and you shall be answerable only to this board, to me, and of course, the President of these United States. Your first duty will be to question any and all eyewitnesses who saw the invaders or who were attacked by them. This top-secret dossier includes the names of all known witnesses and victims which have been collected so far as of 0830 hours this morning. You shall have access to all military installations and will be expected to begin operating as a liaison between all branches of the military by six a.m. tomorrow morning. Since the invaders have made their methodical forays obviously in two different directions but beginning at the same sector in and around New Orleans, one column marching east and the other northeast, you will keep yourself busy interrogating all military personnel who have made contact with the invaders. We shall expect reports from you, Mr. Douglas, twice daily at 0900 hours and at 1800 hours. Do you have any questions?"

"Yes," Eric said, his head swimming from the overwhelming task he had just been given. "How many operatives will I have and where can I meet with them?"

"Fifty operatives have been transferred to your office from the CIA, the FBI, the Secret Service, and many other branches of the intelligence divisions in our government. At this very moment these men are enroute to Atlanta where you are scheduled to brief them at 2200 hours this evening. They have been supplied with helicopters and pilots dressed in civilian clothes to take them wherever they shall need to go upon a moment's notice."

Eric arose, glancing at his watch. "Then I'd better be off, gentlemen. Will the military keep me advised as to any and all contacts and confrontations they've had with the invaders?"

"Yes," the Secretary said. "It will be your duty to coordinate all reports and pass those findings along to this board. We will want a complete roster of all casualties, where the invaders were seen, how many contacts were made, where they were headed and at what rate of speed they were traveling. You know what is required. And, by the way—that Miss Chambers of yours. If I were you, I wouldn't let her out of your sight. I wouldn't want the media to get wind of that wild story of hers."

"I understand perfectly, sir."

Suddenly the door opened and a uniformed courier entered carrying a top-secret dispatch. He went over to the Secretary, saluted him, and handed him the paper. The Secretary read it swiftly and jumped to his feet. He looked very weary and quite concerned. "The invading forces are approaching the outskirts of Atlanta from last reports. As of one hour ago several hundred men were killed and injured when a gas pipeline was sabotaged north of Columbus, Georgia. The size of the invading force is unknown but estimates range as high as ten thousand."

"Do you know the size of the force that infiltrated the SAC base and commandeered the bomber?"

"We aren't certain," the Secretary said, mopping his forehead with a handkerchief. "But of one thing we *are* sure. The invaders possess technical knowhow of our most secret weapons. They had no difficulty whatsoever triggering the H-bomb and breaking the coded procedure for releasing the fail-safe mechanism."

One of the generals spoke up. "We have received several conflicting reports concerning the aliens. Several airmen who saw the invaders entering the B-52 at the end of the runway said they had faces so hideous and ugly that it terrified them just to look. Others said they feel that at least a force of several divisions had surrounded the airbase. We also have an eyewitness to the commandeering of the B-52 bomber—the airman who was almost hacked to death with a hatchet while he so valiantly fought against superior numbers to keep the aliens from entering the plane through the open companionway door while it was waiting for take-off clearance. At this moment that airman is in a Houston military hospital. He is still in a coma and not expected to live—but if he does live, rest assured that his country will decorate him for his courage and heroism!"

Eric walked out of the chambers feeling awkward and benumbed by the staggering job he'd just been assigned to handle. He was awed by the magnitude of it all, of being one minute a special operative and the next, thrust into a position of vast responsibility. He could not understand why he had been chosen of all the others in intelligence and national security. Just as he approached Julie who was seated on a bench waiting for him, several men emerged from an office and grinned at him by way of greeting. One man was his administrative chief; the other was the director of the Office of Federal Security.

"Congratulations, Eric," they said in unison, shaking his hand. "A better man couldn't have gotten that job."

Eric looked at them with a jaundiced eye and raised eyebrow. "So you recommended me, eh?"

They laughed and slapped him on the back. "We'll be counting on you, Eric. Keep us posted, will you?" They hurried away before he could reply.

Julie arose and looked up at him. "What was that all about?"

"When there's a dirty job to be done leave it to the Washington bureaucrats to find a fall guy to do it. That way when things go awry they disclaim any responsibility and still hold onto their jobs." He frowned as he watched them enter a door at the far end of the corridor and disappear. He was bitter for the first time in Julie's experience and she suddenly saw a side of him she had not known existed before.

"But you were their best man, the number one operator. Certainly you were next in line for such a job—whatever it is."

"No, it doesn't work that way. My boss should've got the job and I should've been placed in his job. Fifteen years with the department and this is what I get——"

"But, darling," she said, encircling his arm with her soft hands and gazing raptly up at him, "it's all because of this so-called national emergency. I know you'll straighten everything out if you only listen to me——"

He jerked away from her. "You're not starting that business again about the dragon's teeth and the resurrected Indian warriors?"

"There isn't any other explanation for what's been happening. The whole country's in an uproar all because of some misinformation which has been exaggerated all out of proportion—can't you understand that? Why must you be so stubborn? I tell you there are only a dozen Indians—and they're most certainly not hundreds or thousands—just twelve——"

"Julie," he cried, cutting her short, "if you talk about this one more time, so help me, I'll never speak to you again. Now come on with me. We're flying to Atlanta. I've been placed in charge of an investigative unit and there's much to be done."

Julie bit her lip and swallowed her pride as she fell into step beside him. "You're supervising the investigation of the Indians?"

"Who said they were Indians?" he snapped. "As far as we're concerned, a force of unknown aliens of unknown numbers and unknown national origin have invaded the southern part of the United States and for all intents and purposes have been engaging in guerilla warfare, sabotage, and have even set off an H-bomb after commandeering a SAC bomber. There have been thousands of deaths and casualties, the city of Birmingham and a dozen other cities and towns in three states have been wiped from the face of the map—there is wholesale rioting and panic in the streets of every major city in the South—and you still say it's all because of twelve zombies!"

"I didn't know that—" she gasped. "I had no idea they had captured a bomber and set off the bomb—"

"You still say they're only twelve Indians?"

Julie was stunned. She bit her lip and fell silent, standing aside as Eric pressed the elevator button. A moment later the door sloughed open and they entered the elevator to be whisked down to the ground level. Two armed escorts ushered them to a waiting electric car. As soon as they were seated, they were chauffeured rapidly through a long tunnel-like passage to the helicopter pad where Eric had landed his craft that morning. A few minutes later they were airborne on a southerly course for Atlanta.

As they reached the Blue Ridge Mountains, Eric descended to three thousand feet and asked Julie, "Would you like to poke around some Indian burial mounds in North Carolina?"

"What are you talking about?"

"The Indian burial mounds. I know where there are quite a few just waiting for you to explore them."

"So do I, Eric. What are you trying to do—get rid of me?"

"In a way, yes. But only until this thing is over—and the dangerous fallout has dissipated over the South."

"So that's it. Well, forget that. I'm going with you and my mind's made up. I'm going to stick with you, darling," she said with a mocking lilt to her voice, "until you realize that I've been right all along. Those Indians will not be stopped——"

"When're you going to stop talking about those resurrected Indians, for Pete's sake?" he shouted above the roar of the helicopter rotors.

"When you realize that we're not being invaded by aliens or Communists or anything like that. When you finally get it through that thick stubborn skull of yours that you've got to listen to me and let me help resolve this thing before the whole darn country goes ape about it."

"All right. This is getting us nowhere. I don't want to argue with you. You heard the Secretary speaking for the board of inquiry and he said it for me—your idea is novel and interesting and they'll look into it after this national emergency is over and we've rounded up the aliens."

"Ho, ho, ho," she mocked him. "Why must all of you men be such obstinate ninnies? Why can't you be objective?"

"Please, Julie, will you get off my back and quit this? I've my orders and that's that. There isn't anything I can do."

"Not even if you have tangible evidence that what I'm saying is the truth?"

"We'll see about that. In the meantime there is no tangible evidence. We just have your say-so and those pictures. Nothing more. You only have a legend to go on. Just because something was written on an old parchment made from animal skins over a hundred years ago is no reason to believe it. Frankly, I'm a little dismayed at your tenacity about this. If anyone is obstinate, it isn't me."

"Those are your final words?"

He glanced at her and nodded. "For the moment," he smiled, reaching across to touch her. They were flying above a scenic mountain. In the distance the setting sun cast a myriad of red and gold colors over the horizon. She permitted him to caress her hand for a moment before she withdrew it and turned her attention to the passing scenery below.

An hour and forty minutes later they landed at the rooftop landing pad atop the building where Eric was to have his first meeting with the group he had been assigned to head. Two men hurried toward them and shook hands with Eric.

Eric smiled at Julie and introduced her. "This is Jack Crane," he said of a tall, balding man in his late thirties. "And this is Ed Milliken," he said of a stocky man with long black hair.

"You've worked together before?" Julie asked as they led them toward the roof door and then entered an elevator.

"Yes," Jack said. "And I might like to add that they couldn't have made a better choice when it came to putting Eric in charge of this investigation. He's a real slavedriver and if he uses his whip on us like he uses it on himself, we'll have this wrapped up in forty-eight hours."

They rode down in the elevator to the fifteenth floor. They left the elevator and walked toward a doorway which was guarded by two MPs armed with sidearms and walkie-talkies. They curtly snapped to attention when Eric approached.

"At ease, men," Eric grinned, pleased that they had recognized him. He had often worked out of that building and had been well-known to everyone employed there in the many departments of the Office of Federal Security.

They entered a large meeting room where forty-eight men awaited them seated in tablet armchairs. They stopped talking and gave Eric and the others their undivided attention as soon as Eric, Julie, Ed Milliken and Jack Crane stepped to the front of the room. While Eric showed Julie to a chair, Jack Crane took the rostrum and told the group, "Gentlemen, this is our new administrator, Eric Douglas. He has just arrived from the Pentagon, as you know."

Eric stepped forward and clasped his hands behind him as he looked out at the asembly. "Gentlemen, we've been given an assignment to do and I won't waste words getting to the point. Our task is to gather intelligence about the alien invaders and then to coordinate this intelligence with a view to aiding the military. At the moment, other departments of the Government are also at work gathering intelligence data, but so far nothing has been learned which might give us a clue to how to do this job." He turned and asked Jack, "Would you pull down the wall map, please?"

Jack turned to the wall and lowered a huge map of the United States.

Eric turned around and pointed at New Orleans. "This is where contact was first made and where the aliens started out from." He then pointed at the airbase location east of New Orleans. "This is where the aliens infiltrated the airbase and commandeered the B-52 which they later so tragically exploded over Birmingham. Here, here, and here," he pointed, "they wantonly attacked innocent people and committed all sorts of sabotage from blowing up power transmission lines to power plants and gasoline stations. Along this highway and this one, they committed acts of carnage in which hundreds of vehicles were wrecked and destroyed and several thousand people were killed or injured. This is all we have to go on. We don't know who they are or what they look like or where they're going or where they're from. We do know that they've been conducting a reign of terror that knows no parallel in the history of this country and that they're not armed with conventional weapons, but instead with primitive arms such as bows, arrows, lances, tomahawks, and knives. We theorize that they illegally entered this country via commercial airlines and were unable to bring arms in with them, so they fashioned their own weapons once they had arrived and rendezvoused." Eric paused and went to the blackboard. He picked up a piece of chalk and drew a triangular pattern. "This is the strategy, gentlemen. There are forty-eight of you who will be sent out in twenty-four teams. You will begin in Louisiana by questioning everyone you can find who has knowledge of what happened. You will be given carte blanche authority to enter police stations, military posts, newspaper and television broadcasting stations during this emergency with a view to enabling you to coordinate *all* data. As you proceed northward toward apex—which is this headquarters building here in Atlanta, you will use the high priority microwave channel on the radios you will be given to keep us posted. Each team will report in on the hour, at times Ed Milliken will assign you." Eric turned and nodded at Milliken. Then he turned and went to the blackboard again. "Each team will be designated a number and a strip map of the area you are to comb in the search for eyewitnesses. Ed Milliken will have duplicates of those maps with each sector marked off clearly. In this way we will be able to shift as many teams as necessary to other areas in the event something is learned. Are there any questions?"

"Yes, sir!" several men opted at once.

Eric pointed to a man in the first row. He arose and queried, "What if we encounter these aliens face to face?"

"A good question. Try to avoid contact if at all possible. We need to take prisoners for purposes of interrogation. In the event that prisoners have been taken, we will fly a team of interrogators to question them immediately."

"But what happens if there's a confrontation?"

"Try to avoid it if at all possible. If you must use your sidearms, then shoot to disable, not kill."

A second man was called on. He arose and glanced around at the others. "Sir, there is wholesale panic in the streets. The roads, streets, and highways everywhere are jammed with panicky citizens. How in God's name are we to get through that? I've just come from Jackson and several of the others here have had one heck of a time traveling here from the respective cities where they were assigned."

"Each team will be assigned an Air Force helicopter. Aboard will be motorbikes for surface transportation. Each helicopter pilot will remain with his chopper to monitor the radioed reports you will transmit from your mobile packs on the motorbikes. Is that clear? Any further questions?"

There were none.

Eric smiled without amusement. "Very well, gentlemen, you may step forward in teams of two and Ed will assign you your search areas and maps and your ID numbers."

Six

Running Deer, Sharp Tomahawk, and the four braves with them gaped in awe at the terrifying thunderball of weird light that had so brilliantly lit up the skies for as far as the eye could see in the east.

"It is Great Spirit welcoming us, my brothers!" cried Running Deer ecstatically. "The Great Spirit has exploded a sun to inform all our brothers that we are arisen and on our way to sit with them at the council of councils."

"Yea, our brother Running Deer speaks the truth," Sharp Tomahawk said, his face turned upward at the mighty glow in the skies. "The shamans of all the tribes will know by now that the hour has arrived. We must hasten, to smoke the pipe with them and eat cakes of *sofk*. And who knows, perhaps we will also see for the first time the children of our children's children."

"I would like that," Cold Wind said. "My sons and daughters were not yet married when I left the Shawnee to sleep the long sleep with you, my brothers."

"And I, too, would like to see the children of my children's children," said Blazing Arrow, the Susquehanna. "My squaw, Little Fawn, was with papoose when I departed. She gave me two sons and I was hoping for a daughter. I will give them rich gifts, the children of my children's children."

Running Deer's lean face turned away from the holocaust in the skies and said, "I wonder what the children of my children's children look like—if they resemble my father, the chief of all the Choctaw."

War Pony laughed. "Perhaps we may never see them. Here we are in this strange country which was once our hunting ground and nothing is the same. Since my people, the Seneca, and all our peoples hunted here and were driven to the prairies west of the Mississippi, the paleface has ruined our land. He has erected hideous painted walls everywhere with pictures painted on them of their half-naked white women and where there were once forests and streams and fields for as far as the eye could see, there are now ugly piles of junk and black roads made from the tar pits and mountains of warehouses and places they call houses."

"Do not be sick, my brother," Gray Eagle said. "When we unite with our brothers, the children of our children's children, we will reclaim all this land and drive the paleface out forever. Then we will work to put everything back the way it was. Before we sleep the eternal sleep, we shall see this done, I swear it."

"My brothers, it is time to resume our journey again," Running Deer said, moving to the camper. "Come, let us go. We must find our way out of this strange and desolate wasteland to the place where the white man has sent our brothers. This iron-covered wagon only travels on the roads and we must use these roads in hopes that they will lead us to the reservations."

"Surely," Cold Wind said as he seated himself in the back of the walk-in camper, "our brothers would not permit the white men to build roads on their lands—so how then will we find them?"

"We will find them," Running Deer said. The other braves seated themselves in the back of the vehicle. Then Running Deer turned the key and started the engine. They drove out of the wooded area beside the secondary highway in eastern Alabama where they had hidden themselves during the daylight hours, and began to head northward, following the road.

"Ugh!" War Pony cried, pointing at a roadsign, "look there. It say gas station up ahead. What gas station?"

"I don't know," Running Deer said.

"Maybe that mean fire water for iron horse watering place."

"Why no say that?"

Sharp Tomahawk laughed. "White man crazy. He no say anything he means. Everything he say spoken with forked tongue."

Running Deer slowed the vehicle as they approached a gasoline station. Just as they turned off the road, a sedan began to pull away from the pumps. "See, there is watering place. Maybe we water this iron horse?"

Running Deer pulled into the service lane between the pumps. Two men inside the station peered out and one of them shouted, "Be right with you guys."

"What he say?" Gray Eagle asked.

"He coming soon," Running Deer said, watching as the man slowly walked toward them. He came alongside the driver's window and frowned when he saw the six Indians. "We don't serve no hippies at this place," he said.

"What hippies?" Running Deer said.

The man rubbed his red neck and leered. "You bums are hippies."

Running Deer drew his knife and held it poised as though ready to throw it.

When the attendant saw this he cried, "Okay, y'all, filler up. I was only joshin' you."

He turned and went to the pump and then took the hose and nozzle toward the gas tank filler cap. Then he opened the filler cap and put the nozzle inside. Sharp Tomahawk, Cold Wind, and Blazing Arrow got out to watch. They were fascinated by the clicking numbers and the dinging bell that tolled off the gallons pumped. When the clicking of the numbers stopped and the bell rang for the last time, the man withdrew the nozzle, replaced the cap on the tank and then put the hose into its receptacle on the side of the pump. He turned to Running Deer uneasily, trying to avoid meeting the gazes of the others who had crowded around him. "That'll be five twenty-five."

Running Deer looked at his outstretched hand. "What that?"

"Money. Wampum," the red-necked man said, leering now at their Indian garb, the feathers, the tomahawks Cold Wind and War Pony made no secret of brandishing. "Where you hippies from?" he asked.

"We no got wampum," Running Deer said.

The man's eyes narrowed. He turned and shouted to his partner inside the station. "Hey, Pete, call the sheriff. These hippies ain't got the money."

When Cold Wind, who was standing near the gas station window, saw the man inside pick up the telephone, he whipped his tomahawk out of his belt and smashed in the plate glass, then jumped through and grabbed the telephone out of the flabbergasted man's hand. He put the telephone to his ear and when he heard a voice at the other end, he smashed it down upon the man's head.

The man at the gas pump tried to make a break for it, to run away, but War Pony's blade arced through the air and buried itself in the middle of his back. The man screamed and fell and then lay still.

Cold Wind, who paused to take the scalp of the man inside the gas station, saw the cash register. He picked it up and carried it outside to show it to the others. "Look'm this," he said, putting it down and then punching one of the keys. When the bell jangled and the cash drawer flew open, he jumped back, startled. Running Deer and the others howled with laughter.

Cold Wind knelt and sifted through the coins and dollar bills inside the cash drawer. He held up a fistful and said, "White man's wampum. Me take'm. Maybe buy'm presents for the children of my children's children."

After he stuffed his pockets with coin and threw away the dollar bills, he picked up the register and hurled it at one of the gas pumps. The gas pump handle and hose fell to the ground and gasoline began to run out. War Pony, anxious to use his lighter again, picked up one of the dollar bills Cold Wind had discarded and lit it. Then he started to drop the burning banknote on the gasoline but Running Deer cried out, "Wait! We ride iron horse out first or iron horse burn'm up too."

The warriors hurried to the camper and climbed inside. War Pony then ignited another dollar bill and tossed it burning to the ground several feet from the widening pool of gasoline gushing from the hose nozzle. He climbed into the camper just as Running Deer started it up and began to drive forward, the vehicle jerking as Running Deer tried to shift the gears. He finally managed to get it moving in the right gear and they turned toward the highway just as the gasoline was touched off by the burning dollar bill. There was a roar of flame and then the underground tanks blew up with a fearful roar and a towering pillar of flame collared by great clouds of black smoke.

The braves in the camper laughed in triumph as they rolled down the highway, watching as the conflagration set off the service station building and the trees at the edge of a forest beyond. By the time they reached the top of a hill a mile away the fire had spread to the main part of the forest and a major holocaust was begun.

A half hour later when they slowed down to approach a small town, the red glow on the distant horizon was as bright as a new moon.

Running Deer stopped the camper just on the outskirts of the town after they drove through it slowly. He had to fumble considerably with the switches on the dashboard in order to find out which switch turned the headlights on and off. It was growing quite dark and it was not at all easy to manipulate the controls in the dark. The paleface's foreign camper was still unfamiliar to Running Deer but he was determined to learn everything there was to know about how it worked and how to make it work for them.

"Why we stop now?" Sharp Tomahawk asked him; somehow he wanted to keep going, heading north toward the Indian reservations they hoped to find, but he as well wanted to obey Running Deer. Since Running Deer had more or less assumed the role of their chief, no one had questioned him or his judgment for there had been no reason for doing so.

Running Deer opened the door and got out. He stretched his limbs and reached behind the seat for his tomahawk. "We go now. Get gifts for our children's children's children; take scalps, and burn town. We leave path of dead palefaces and burned towns so our Red Brothers will know we are getting nearer and they will be waiting for us. The palefaces make talk on their magic ropes and maybe our brothers are listening."

War Pony grinned toothily as he whetted the blade of his knife against the nap of his buckskin trousers. "Running Deer speaks with the tongue of a great chief. I, War Pony, follow wherever Running Deer leads."

"And I follow too," Cold Wind and Blazing Arrow chorused.

Gray Eagle and Sharp Tomahawk clapped their clenched fists against their breasts and grunted in assent too.

Running Deer then motioned for them to follow. They climbed out of the camper and began to trot along after him. When they reached the main street, they turned the corner and followed Running Deer into a drugstore. The clerk behind the counter looked up, startled. After a moment he said, "Hey, you get out of here. We don't cater to no hippies."

Running Deer nodded to War Pony who immediately drew his blade and hurled it. The knife buried to the hilt in the man's chest. He fell backward against the shelves of patent medicines, a widening red stain of blood spreading across the front of his white coat. War Pony was over the counter in one leap, withdrawing his blade a moment later. Then the others spread out in the store, smashing showcases with their tomahawks, overturning the register and display racks, breaking bottles and hurling boxes of powder, candies, toilet articles and sundries in every direction. War Pony came around the counter wiping his blade clean and hanging the druggist's scalp from his belt. He stopped to investigate a display case of cigarette lighters and tried several. Finding one that worked, he tossed it to Running Deer with a cry of triumph. Then he found another lighter and another which he lighted and then tossed to Cold Wind and Sharp Tomahawk. Blazing Arrow and Gray Eagle came over and tried the lighters until they each found one that worked. Then they busied themselves with the task of setting the store on fire. When the flames were beginning to engulf everything in sight, they filed out and jogged down the street until they came to a supermarket.

Inside, a number of men and women pushing shopping carts looked out and saw the flames from the direction of the drugstore. They did not pay any attention to the six Indians who entered and began to wander along the aisles of foodstuffs, canned goods, cheeses, and vegetables. When the braves reached the meat counters at the end of the aisles, they stopped in amazement, picking up hams, chops, steaks, legs of lamb and chickens. Then they carried the raw meats to the fruits and vegetable department where they loaded their arms with as much as they could carry. As they departed from the store, a food checker, standing at the window with the others watching the flames gut the drugstore, noticed them and gave the alarm.

Running Deer put his booty down inside a grocery cart and let out a war whoop. The others followed suit, drawing their weapons as they put their things down. Then they began to rush the clerks and customers, slashing them with knives and tomahawks, ignoring the helpless people's screams. One man tried to flee through the front doors but Blazing Arrow's knife buried itself in his back and he fell screaming to the floor. Blazing Arrow retrieved his blade and went after one of the bag boys who was trying to hide behind a display mountain of ginger ale and root beer. The Indian caught him amid flying bottles that smashed and exploded on the concrete floor. He slit his throat and then went after one of the white-coated executives who was trying to get out the front door over the slain man's body. Blazing Arrow stopped him with a well-aimed bottle. Then he leaped over the register and caught him, dragging him backwards over the checkout counter, scalped him and slit his throat from ear to ear.

Blood and gore was everywhere by the time the butchery was done. Sixteen bodies were strewn in the doorway, over the counters, in the aisles, and two of them were in the meat case. Then Running Deer and his warriors calmly took their booty out of the store in three grocery carts and walked down the street, pushing the carts ahead of them. Two fire trucks had arrived on the scene and were trying to extinguish the flames gutting the drugstore. No one seemed to notice the six Indians crossing the street, watching the firefighters and calmly entering a department store down at the far corner.

Two clerks saw the Indians enter pushing their grocery carts. They screamed when they saw the blood-smeared bodies and the glistening bloodstains on their weapons and scanty attire. Both Gray Eagle and War Pony emitted whoops and grabbed the women, silencing them forever and taking their scalps. Then they wandered through the aisles in the department store hurling everything out of the way that stood in their paths. When Running Deer came to a display counter filled with toupees and wigs, he jumped up on the counter, hurling the hairpieces into the air and crying out, "See, the paleface also gathers scalps! We take'm!" Then they overturned one of the carts, emptying it of the food, and filled it with all the hairpieces from the counter. Then, lighting their lighters, they set the store on fire and went out into the street which was rapidly becoming choked with people milling about watching the firefighters combat the drugstore fire.

Running Deer signaled the others to follow and he led them to an alley where he told War Pony and Gray Eagle to stand watch over the grocery carts while they scouted around some more.

Then Running Deer led Sharp Tomahawk, Cold Wind, and Blazing Arrow down the street toward the blinking marquee lights of a motion picture house. The cashier was out of the cage standing on the sidewalk watching the firemen and did not notice the four Indians enter the theater.

Running Deer held up his hand to halt the others when he noticed the plush carpet underfoot. He knelt to touch it and muttered, "Red and blue grass that grows inside the paleface's great house—we must find'm out about this. Can use this in wigwam and wikkiup."

Then Sharp Tomahawk held up his hand to call their attention to the sound of gunfire and the thunder of hooves riding across a prairie. Drawing his blade he led the way into the dark interior of the auditorium and let out a surprised cry when he saw hundreds of Indians riding across the screen encircling a wagon train of white settlers. When the others joined Sharp Tomahawk and then, with gaping mouths watched the miraculous pictorial scene come to life, they could not speak nor move for several minutes. Then Running Deer noticed that the spotlight coming from the projection booth overhead seemed to be projecting the picture. He signalled the others to take the scalps of the palefaces in the audience and then went to look for the way up to the projection booth.

When the people in the theater had been massacred and the projection booth operator slain and scalped by Running Deer, Sharp Tomahawk and the others joined Running Deer and stood marveling at the magic eye machine that showed pictures on the wall.

"That my people, the Shawnee," boasted Cold Wind. "How paleface get'm my people in pictures on wall?"

Running Deer took his tomahawk and smashed the projector. The reel fell off and the film began to unravel in every direction. Blazing Arrow touched his lighter to it and they were almost burned before they could scramble out of there.

Carrying their armloads of scalps, dripping with blood and gore, they left the theater, failing to notice the cashier standing in her booth out front, numb with the shock of seeing them. They rounded the corner and returned to the alley where they had left War Pony and Gray Eagle. Then they made their way out of the town toward the place where they had concealed the camper.

By the time they were back on the highway, driving north again, the entire sky behind them was glowing with the flames they had ignited.

Gray Eagle, sitting beside the huge pile of scalps and hairpieces, tried to work the knobs of the radio he had been carrying ever since he had first taken it two days before. Suddenly it went on and he cried out to the others, "I make magic talk box work. Hear, my brothers, the voice of the paleface."

". . . It is not known how many alien invaders there are, but official estimates place their numbers in the thousands. Throughout the cities and towns of the South, there has been wholesale sabotage and mayhem and countless hundreds of innocent men, women, and children have been slain," the terse-sounding voice of a network announcer droned on. "A state of national emergency has been declared and a strict curfew has just gone into effect until the emergency has passed. All citizens except military personnel on official duty, police officers, and agents of the federal, state, and municipal governments have been authorized to arrest anyone on the streets between the hours of dusk and dawn. The military provost marshal in each area of jurisdiction has been given full authority to enforce martial law. . . ."

Gray Eagle turned one of the knobs and another announcer was heard, "Ladies and gentlemen, your local government, state government, and federal government urges all citizens to remain indoors and stay off the streets and roads until the all-clear has been given. Should anyone see suspicious individuals they are urged to notify their nearest police department or sheriff's office. Above all, keep calm, do not panic, and stay at home. Now, for some relaxing music until the next news bulletin. . . ."

"What they saying?" Gray Eagle asked the others.

"I no understand," Sharp Tomahawk said.

Running Deer grunted. He had only been half listening. He could understand the white man's tongue and speak it fluently himself, but only at a slow pace. The voices they had been hearing over the magic talking box spoke too rapidly for him to catch every word. He did not understand any of it. Words such as sabotage, mayhem, alien invaders, and the like were beyond him.

A bright airy instrument was being played.

"Sound'm like wind blowing through the trees," Blazing Arrow said.

"No, sound'm more like white man funeral," said War Pony. The others laughed heartily and grunted in agreement.

Just as they rounded a turn in the highway, they saw ahead many parked cars with red and blue lights flashing. Running Deer slowed the vehicle but not in time to avoid being seen. Two policemen, who had been standing beside their parked squad cars at the road block, shouted into bull horns, "You there, stop and get out with your hands in the air! This is to notify you that you're in violation of the curfew——"

Running Deer tried to back the camper up so he could turn it around, but the engine stalled and he couldn't manage to get it started again. The policemen began to walk toward them, playing the beams of their flashlights in their direction.

Running Deer threw open the door and jumped out, brandishing his tomahawk. He was picked up in the beam of light and a pistol shot rang out. The bullet whizzed over Running Deer's head. He turned and shouted to the other braves. "They are too many, my brothers. Come, we will take to the forest where they can't see us."

At once the others piled out of the camper, ran around the side of the bus that shielded them from the view of the police running toward them on foot, and darted into the shelter of the forest beside the road. When they had fled several hundred yards, Running Deer gave them the signal to take cover and attack their pursuers. "Strike swift and silent like the snake," he ordered.

The braves fanned out and hid in the shadows. As a policeman carrying a searchlight in one hand and a pistol in the other approached ahead of the other officers, Cold Wind stepped out of hiding and seized him from behind.

A slash of his blade and the policeman fell, his searchlight grabbed up by Blazing Arrow who played it in the direction of the other pursuers and then led them into the ambush where they were silently dispatched one by one.

"Where we go now?" Gray Eagle whispered.

Running Deer looked up at the stars in the night sky overhead. He pointed northward. "Follow me, my brothers. We will keep to the forest until we come to a road where the long-knives are not to be found. Then we will catch another iron horse."

For two hours they fled through the dense forest on foot, moving toward what seemed to be the lights of a town. But when they reached the end of the forest they discovered that the light they had seen glowing against the black curtain of night overhead was that of a great wall holding back a vast lake of water. Sluicing through floodgates were six waterfalls that dropped to a small river below. The lights along the top of the dam enabled them to see that it appeared to be unguarded.

"That white wall," Sharp Tomahawk said, "holds back a great lake. The paleface even stops the water from reaching the land and the creatures of the forest."

"It is big like a white cliff that wall what holds back the water," marveled War Pony. "It like'm dam the beaver of my father's country builds."

Running Deer nodded sagely. "War Pony is right. That is dam. We will knock down dam and flood valley."

"How we do that?" Sharp Tomahawk asked.

"We will find a way. The Great Spirit will help us."

"It will take much long time," Gray Eagle said. "Let the dam be. We must hurry to gather all the tribes."

"It will not take more than one sun to knock it down," Cold Wind said.

Running Deer grunted and pointed up at the summit of a low mountain which overlooked the dam. The moon, just emerging from behind a cloudy horizon in the east, threw its pale light upon the landscape. "We knock dam down ere the moon reaches the top of this night's sky."

The others peered upward in the direction he was pointing. Then they began to grunt in approval and exchange smiles and nods. "Running Deer is right," Sharp Tomahawk said. "We will go up there and the Great Spirit will hear our prayers. He will help us tumble that mountain down upon the dam so it will break and flood the white man's valley and drown many palefaces. Then the trees and wild flowers will grow again where the white man's lake is now and the forest creatures, the buck and the doe and the rabbit, will be as before."

They began to jog toward the mountain, climbing upward through woods and gradually more rocky terrain. When they were one third of the way up, Running Deer stationed War Pony, Gray Eagle, and Blazing Arrow beneath a crag. "You will await my signal and then you will shout for the Great Spirit to listen to your voices."

Ten minutes later Running Deer, Sharp Tomahawk, and Cold Wind were on the peak. They put their shoulders behind a huge boulder and began to push it toward the slope. When it finally went over, gaining momentum as it did so, taking with it small saplings, small rocks, and earth, Running Deer and his braves began to shout at the top of their lungs, invoking the Great Spirit to heed their cries. Below, War Pony and his companions began their shouts, the unified acoustics of their voices shaking the very face of the mountain. Suddenly, as the rolling boulder began to gather speed, taking with it more and more of the loose shale, rock, and earth, the very mountain began to tremble. By the time it reached the place where War Pony, Gray Eagle, and Cold Wind were standing pressed against the mountainside beneath the shelter of the crag overhead, half the mountain was descending. A few moments later the avalanche began to fall upon the upper walls of the dam which stretched from one end to the other of the valley some five hundred yards wide. Seconds after this happened, the concrete and steel bulkheads began to buckle and split asunder as millions of gallons of fresh water held back by the dam began to rupture the splitting walls. With a loud roar the dam toppled like a child's toy being crushed by a giant pavement roller. Behind it a mammoth sheet of water a hundred feet tall gushed downward, inundating everything before it in a crescendo of deafening sound. The lake, which had been contained within the area behind the dam for as far as their eyes could see, drained with surprising rapidity, cascading over the breach to the valley below.

War Pony, Gray Eagle, and Blazing Arrow began to shout and whoop at the tops of their lungs. The Great Spirit had graced them by causing the mountain to tumble down and destroy the white man's dam. The Great Spirit was indeed smiling upon them.

Running Deer and the braves with him descended and stood beside their comrades watching as the water flooded downward until the valley beyond was turned into a vast raging river of angry waters, tossing trees and bridges before it like twigs in a flooding stream.

Two men who had been stationed at the small guard house on the far side of the dam emerged and stood gaping in disbelief at the holocaust. War Pony saw them before any of the other braves. He lifted his bow, fitted an arrow to the bowstring, aimed and fired. The shaft found its mark right between the eyes of the man nearest the edge of the demolished dam. The other man looked up and saw the group of Indians on the opposite slope. He yelled and turned and ran for his life, diving for cover and then scrambling up the hillside toward the road. The other Indians who had bows tried to stop him but missed.

Laughing, they put their bows aside and began to file after Running Deer, jogging easily over the rough terrain like mountain goats following the leader.

Shortly before dawn they reached a railroad right-of-way that ran through the forest. They sat upon the roadbed and hammered upon the iron tracks curiously.

"That road the iron horse that puffs smoke rides upon," Running Deer said. "One time I see the great iron horse ride on such tracks and it frightened all the horses and chased away the herd of buffalo. I was a little brave then, only eight summers old, and my father the chief led his warriors off to battle the iron horse and they came back with many scalps. My father the chief caught the palefaces on the iron horse when it stopped to drink water from a great tank beside the tracks."

"There is such a tank by the tracks over yonder hill," Gray Eagle said. "I saw it when I scouted the way a little while ago. Perhaps if we go there we can catch an iron horse, too?"

"Aye, that is a good plan, Gray Eagle," Running Deer said. "We will do that." He began to run again, stepping from tie to tie, jogging easily southward toward the water tower which came into view as soon as they rounded a turn in the roadbed. When they reached it, Gray Eagle and War Pony climbed to the top and looked around. Blazing Arrow pulled the chain beneath the spout and a torrent of water showered down upon him. He let it go, sputtering and standing there with a look of shocked incredulity on his face. The other braves howled with laughter and pointed derisively at Blazing Arrow. But Blazing Arrow did not mind. He grinned toothily and laughed also.

A few minutes later Gray Eagle shouted from the top of the tower, "Hark, my brothers! The iron horse that puffs smoke signals from its teepee comes and behind it are many covered wagons."

One of the other braves noticed that the railroad tracks seemed to be vibrating and he pressed his ear to it. "Listen, my brothers! We can hear the iron horse. It is slowing. Maybe it will stop to drink water."

"And when it does," Running Deer said, clenching his tomahawk, "we will leap upon it and kill all the palefaces."

The braves spread out and found places of hiding from which they would be able to observe the approaching train without being seen. Running Deer and Sharp Tomahawk hid on the other side of the water tower a few yards from the roadbed. Cold Wind and Blazing Arrow crouched down on the opposite side of the tower funnel, ready to leap down upon the cab of the iron horse when it stopped. War Pony and Gray Eagle perched behind some empty barrels beside the platform, their knives and tomahawks drawn and ready.

A few minutes elapsed before the train huffed into view, ascending the grade and slowing to navigate a sharp turn that led to the approach to the water tower. It was almost at a dead stop when Running Deer and his war party attacked, leaping upon the enginehouse and then upon the engineer and fireman. Then they leaped over the tops of the boxcars behind and ran in single file to the caboose at the end where they found two more train crewmen and killed them before they could cry out or jump up from the bunks where they had been sleeping.

Running Deer and his braves moved forward again by climbing over the boxcars, exploring each one as they proceeded. Several of the cars were empty, but eight of them were filled with boxes, cartons, and barrels. Placing Sharp Tomahawk in the engine to watch over the controls and to keep the fire roaring by stoking the furnace box with shovelfuls of coal, Running Deer went back to the cargo-laden boxcars to see what they had found.

The train, gathering speed, rifled along the track at a breakneck pace, roaring through small crossings and towns and past stations without a pause. Several red signals ahead were seen by Sharp Tomahawk as the train approached, but were struck down by arrows he fired at them as the engine roared by. They rumbled down a grade and then crossed a railroad bridge and continued barreling along through a freightyard at the edge of a town. Railroad men jumped out of the way, shaking their fists at the runaway train and several men who had been unable to get out of the way in time were run down, their bodies ground beneath the churning wheels.

Running Deer and his braves in the boxcars soon wearied of their sport of exploring the cargo which consisted of industrial machinery, barrels of phosphorus, and farm implements. Then Cold Wind got the idea to roll the barrels off the train. Just as they approached an embankment that ran along a river, he kicked the first barrel out of the open doors of the boxcar. The barrel bounced along the roadbed and then landed in the river. An instant later the phosphorus exploded when the contact with the water ignited it. Upon seeing this, Running Deer opened one of the barrels and reached inside to feel the strange powder. "It feel like'm flour," he said, sprinkling it out of the open door. "Why it go boom when it hit the river?"

"Maybe water make it thunder?" suggested War Pony.

"He is right," Gray Eagle said.

"What we do with it?" Cold Wind asked.

Running Deer grinned. "We do something the paleface won't forget."

"Aye, my brother," Gray Eagle said. Then he pointed at the first boxcar. "There funny iron barrels in there with little wheels at one end. What is that?"

Running Deer and the others stepped out of the open box door to investigate. They clung to the sides of the car and climbed to the next car ahead, just behind the coal tender. Then they entered the open door and investigated a cargo of canisters containing chlorine gas. The canisters were held into place by ropes and were carefully padded to keep them from bumping. Danger signs and skulls and crossbones were evident, too, warning handlers to truck with caution.

"That sign of bones," Running Deer explained to his braves, "mean stuff in iron barrels with little wheels at one end is bad medicine. He who touches stuff turns to bones."

Sharp Tomahawk and Blazing Arrow approached the bottles gingerly. They touched one of them and turned and grinned at Running Deer. Then Blazing Arrow placed his hand on the wheel and began to turn it. After two complete turns a hissing sound was heard and a vapor was seen rising. Running Deer sniffed it and cried, "Turn wheel back. Evil air will turn us to skeletons!"

Blazing Arrow and the others smelled it, too. But he turned it off and then stood gaping at it. "How paleface get'm evil air in little barrels?"

The train began to slow down and the warriors in the boxcars looked out to see what the matter was. Sharp Tomahawk, who had left the engine to look at the car cried, "Me forget to put more black stones in furnace. Iron horse stop going." He clambered out of the boxcar and over the tender to the engine. Then he opened the door and looked inside the firebox. The fire had gone out.

"Iron horse stop. No more fire. We make'm new fire."

Gray Eagle and several of the others came to the aid of Sharp Tomahawk and they kindled a new fire with bits of wood broken off the first boxcar with tomahawks. But still the engine continued to go slower and slower until it was almost at a standstill.

A sign ahead at a road crossing could be seen. Running Deer stepped down from the engine cab and peered at it.

Then he turned and, shielding his eyes from the sun, peered into the east.

"What does sign say?" Blazing Arrow asked.

"It say words I not know exactly," Running Deer said, turning to look at it again. The sign, painted neatly on metal read: "U.S. Government Property. No Trespassing. Federal Penitentiary at Atlanta."

"Maybe words mean our people on reservation nearby?" suggested Blazing Arrow.

Running Deer rubbed his chin and pondered the sign. Then he interpreted it aloud: "Us govern-ment. No trees. The rest I not know."

"Then we scout'm land and see." Blazing Arrow began to jog down the road. He paused and waved once before disappearing out of sight.

Running Deer returned to the train and climbed up to the engine to see what Sharp Tomahawk and the others were doing. They were kneeling in front of the open firebox door, trying to fan the flames. Sharp Tomahawk stood up and said, "Iron horse need fire to make'm go. Fire under water bucket. Water bucket boil and turn'm to steam. Steam hiss out of there and make'm iron arrows go in and out. Arrows go in and out and turn wheels. Wheels go round and pull covered wagons. Not so much magic. Me understand now. We got'm get fire burning so water will boil into steam. Ugh."

Running Deer congratulated Sharp Tomahawk for having figured the mystery out. He sat down and watched as the flames slowly began to eat into the small kindling, fanned by Sharp Tomahawk and War Pony.

A few minutes later Blazing Arrow came running toward them. He was waving his arms excitedly, the quiver and bow upon his back bouncing with every step he ran. "My brothers! I have seen a terrible place where they have many of our brothers locked in cages like the wild animals our fathers in Canada trapped. There are many paleface long-knives guarding them and they are behind great walls. Hurry. We will set them free and they will fight with us!"

Running Deer motioned for Sharp Tomahawk to stay with the train and get the fire burning good. "Come, we will take some of the barrels of flour that burns and the evil air with us." He ran to the boxcars and clambered inside, then handed the braves a large drum of phosphorus and three canisters of chlorine gas. They fell into step behind Blazing Arrow and began to trot through the woods, taking a shortcut to the prison. Fifteen minutes later they were lying in hiding, watching the prison. Uniformed guards patrolled the walls at intervals. Great iron doors sealed the entrance and many other uniformed guards could be seen on the grounds on the other side of the walls.

"We go up there and turn'm on evil air so it turn long-knife sentries to bones. Then we set free prisoners."

Running Deer picked up one of the canisters. Shouldering it, he ran across to the edge of the wall. He knelt in the shadows and signaled for the others to follow. When they had crossed without being noticed by the guards on the walls, Running Deer stood up upon Gray Eagle's back and then got a handhold on the wall. He pulled himself up and then climbed to the outside ledge which ran around the parapet. Then he lowered his sash belt and the braves below tied one of the canisters to it. After he had brought it up, Running Deer checked to make certain the wind would carry the deadly fumes toward the guards and positioned the canister neck so it would blow at them. He turned the valve and at once the hissing could be heard and the fearful odor sniffed. He tried not to breathe in the fumes as they penetrated the glass windows of the guard house atop the wall.

Moments later, he climbed over the wall and ran, crouched over, carrying the canister toward the other guard's station. He released the poisoned gas and proceeded along to the final station where the unfortunate guard there tried to escape but was felled by a swift blow from Running Deer's tomahawk. When this was done and he signaled the others to join him on the wall, Running Deer carried the canister to the door adjoining the wall to the prison proper and boldly knocked on the door when he found it secured from the inside.

A peephole opened and a guard's face looked out. With a swift turn of the valve wheel, Running Deer gave him a burst of the chlorine gas right in the face and eyes. The man screamed, clapping his hands to his eyes. As he did so, Running Deer reached his arm through the peephole and held him fast as he found the bolt and opened the door. Then he dragged the still screaming guard outside and held him while War Pony put him out of his misery with a single slash of his knife.

"Take his clothes and put them on," Running Deer told War Pony. "You will wear the paleface clothes of the long-knife to fool the other sentries. We will kill them all and set our red brothers free."

War Pony stripped off the dead man's jacket and trousers. He donned them. Then he tried to put on the dead man's shoes but couldn't manage it. He tossed them aside and drew up the belt of the trousers while Running Deer helped him with the uniform coat buttons and then stood back to survey him. He picked up the guard's cap and put it on War Pony's head but it was too large.

"You will now take the keys," Running Deer lifted the ring of keys off the belt and showed them to War Pony, "and you will go to the door like this." He demonstrated by showing how the key fit into the keyhole. "Then you turn and lift the latch or turn the handle and the door opens."

War Pony practiced on the wall door and was pleasantly surprised to see that it really worked. He looked at

Running Deer in awe. "How you find'm out so many things about the white man's world?"

"I have learned the way of the white man when I was a youth," Running Deer said. "I observed and used my eyes like Blazing Arrow did not learn to do."

Blazing Arrow who was standing beside them growled at the insult. "Why you say that, Running Deer? I can see the deer at sundown farther than you can shoot the arrow."

"You scouted this place and said there were many of our red brothers here. Show me the red brothers you spoke of."

Blazing Arrow walked to the edge of the wall and pointed at the high windows in the penitentiary. "There, see the lights go on and the big cages in there—see the men penned up in there like jackals in a Navajo corral? Who else but the red man would the white man pen up in there?"

Running Deer's eyes narrowed as he peered into the cell blocks. "All I see are palefaces and black men. I see no Indian faces."

"Well, I did not really see our red brothers—but they must be in there. We will kill all the sentries anyway and then go in there and set free only our red brothers."

Running Deer stared at the cell blocks and said, "We are here so we will carry out our plan. Bring the barrel with the flour that burns."

Cold Wind and Gray Eagle hurried away and returned a few minutes later with the barrel of phosphorus. Running Deer then ordered them to spill it over the wall upon the ground near the front gates of the prison beneath them. He watched as this was done and then ordered the second phosphorus barrel brought up. They carried this barrel into the prison and then descended the staircase to the cell block entrance where they crouched in hiding behind several pillars to watch the guards who were sitting at tables on either side of the cell block doors. A trustee came to the iron doors and one of the guards got up and went to a handle on the wall which he pulled down. The door opened and the trustee, a slightly built man in gray dungarees and numbered shirt, emerged. He walked by the guards as the door slammed and closed after him, and ascended the staircase which Running Deer and his braves had just descended.

Carrying the barrel with them, they moved forward in the shadows toward the guards' station. Running Deer and Sharp Tomahawk drew their knives and circled around, each approaching a guard from behind. They struck simultaneously. Sharp Tomahawk's blade severed the throat of the guard he attacked. Running Deer's blade did not cut his guard's throat. It remained pressed against the windpipe as Running Deer demanded, "Where is my red brothers?"

The guard, unable to turn around to see his attacker, stammered, "Please, don't kill me. I don't know which prisoners are Communists. This is a Federal Penitentiary and we don't label our prisoners by race, creed, or color. We observe only the highest standards of equal treatment for all men."

Sharp Tomahawk, wiping off his knife blade came to Running Deer's side. He knelt in front of the guard who was now on his knees with Running Deer standing behind him, the sharp edge of the blade horizontal against his throat, and touched the point of his knife to the guard's nose. "You tell'm Running Deer where we find our red brothers."

"Oh, I thought you meant Communists. We only have one Indian here that I know of. He murdered a man on the Cheyenne reservation and they sent him here because he's a troublemaker."

"What his name and where he is?" Sharp Tomahawk demanded.

"Cell Block Two, maximum security section. Cell B-18."

"You get'm him," Running Deer said.

"You'll have to let me go first."

"We let you go but my brothers have arrows aimed at you. We will watch you every second, paleface," Sharp Tomahawk said.

Running Deer released the man and signaled for Blazing Arrow and War Pony to draw arrows and place them to their bows. The guard stood up and blinked in surprise when he saw the Indians with their arrows trained on him.

"Okay, okay, I'll get him. But give me your word you won't kill me. This job is only a job and I ain't getting paid enough to die for it. You can let all the prisoners out of here for all I care. I have a wife and four kids to support——"

"We no kill you if you don't talk with forked tongue," Running Deer promised.

"I'll have to throw those switches there in order to unlock the gates," the man said, pointing at a wall panel. "When I reach his cell, which is on the second level down at the end, you will have to press this button." He showed them. "That will open his cell door."

"Me understand," Running Deer said.

The guard deactivated the alarm button and then threw the release switch, permitting the gate to be opened manually. He went to it and opened it. Then he walked slowly up the stairs to the first level and then down the corridor along the front of the cell doors lining the wall at his right to the cell near the end. He paused and turned. Running Deer nodded and touched the button the guard had indicated. He heard a clang and the cell door opened. The guard motioned to the man inside and a tall lean Indian in prison clothes emerged. They proceeded to the guard's station again and entered the security area. Running Deer, making good his promise not to kill the guard, came up behind him and struck him on the back of the head with the flat of his tomahawk.

"Who're you cats?" the Indian asked.

"What your tribe and what're you called?" Sharp Tomahawk asked.

"I am Henry Cheyenne, but my tribal name is Little Chief. My father's father's father was with Sitting Bull at the Little Big Horn when he defeated the army of the long-knife Yellow Hair."

"We not know of that victory," Running Deer said.

"Man!" the young Indian cried. "Where you guys been?"

"We have been sleeping the long sleep under the protection of Father Chitimacha, shaman of the fourteen nations—"

"My father and the elders of the tribe told us of that—but it's only a legend—Indian lore—mythology!"

"It true," Sharp Tomahawk said.

"Wait a second!" cried Little Chief. "Then that's what's been going on out there—the H-bomb explosion over Alabama—the widespread riots and terror in the streets of the cities. Man, don't you know the whole federal government is out looking for you guys? They haven't said a word about an Indian uprising. Only that the country's been attacked by alien invaders."

"We hear but no understand that word on magic talk box," Running Deer said. He motioned to Gray Eagle who held up his radio.

Little Chief laughed. "You guys couldn't be expected to know. That's a radio. You've been sleeping the long sleep for over a hundred and forty years. That explains it —my God!"

"Come, we talk later," Running Deer said. He motioned for War Pony to put down the barrel of phosphorus. Then he gestured for the others to follow him out the way they had come.

Little Chief pointed at the barrel. "What's that?"

"We find'm in covered wagon pulled by iron horse. It fire flour that burns when water touches."

Little Chief's eyes gleamed. He ran over to the barrel and spilled some of the powder over the control panel that operated the electric gates and doors. Turning to Running Deer and the others, he asked, "Where are you guys going after you leave this place?"

"To the land of our fathers—to rally together all the Indian nations," Running Deer said.

"Naw, that's hopeless."

"Why you say that?" Running Deer asked, quite surprised and dismayed.

"You stand only one chance. That is to go to the United Nations. That is in New York on the island of Manhattan."

"This is new league of Indian nations, this United Nations of which you speak?" Running Deer queried.

Little Chief was tempted to laugh but he did not. He remembered the fact that running Deer and the others would have no way of knowing. "I'll explain later," Little Chief said. "Now get out of here, you guys. I'm going to blow this prison to kingdom come!"

"Where that?" Sharp Tomahawk asked.

But Little Chief made no reply. He picked up the barrel and began to run down the corridor toward a door marked *authorized personnel only*. He paused at the door and motioned for them to hurry.

Running Deer gave the signal and his braves followed him up the stairs and out the door which led to the wall. Then they returned to the place where they had climbed up and descended. Once they were on the ground again, they ran to the trees and hid in the brush to wait for Little Chief. They were excited about having met him and rescued him from the white man's prison and they were curious to learn more about the new Indian United Nations.

As they waited, Running Deer turned and saw Sharp Tomahawk sitting a few feet away, trying to avoid his gaze. Then Running Deer remembered that he had given Sharp Tomahawk an order to remain with the iron horse and tend the fire.

"Why you no obey my order?" Running Deer said quietly.

Sharp Tomahawk grinned toothily. "Fire was burning good so me left and catch up with you."

Suddenly there was a loud rumbling followed by a fierce explosion that came from the prison. Then, a moment later, they saw Little Chief running along the wall. Just as the Indian reached the guard station, a burst of machine-gun fire was heard. His body jerked spasmodically as the bullets cut him down. He fell, face down into the doorway of the guard house upon the wall, landing atop a pile of spilled phosphorus that had sprinkled out of the barrel which one of the braves had carried to the wall. The sweat from his brow dropped to the powder and then, in a blazing flash of fire and smoke he vanished and with the consuming conflagration that destroyed the interior of the sentry box, flames dropped to the wall on both sides igniting the shrubbery and grass.

Running Deer and the others arose and began to trek through the forest toward the road which led to the track. Just as they arrived within sight of the train, they heard the sound of many vehicles approaching. They concealed themselves and watched as a column of army jeeps and personnel trucks carrying hundreds of soldiers surrounded the train and began to form up as though to go off in search of those who had stolen the train.

Overhead, helicopters and observation planes began to fly about. "It good thing you come with us," Running Deer told Sharp Tomahawk. "Come we go now before iron birds in sky see us and tell soldiers where we are."

As they jogged through the forest, their feet making hardly a sound as they blended invisibly with the environment, they eluded the helicopters and scout planes and after about an hour reached a large horse farm of rolling pasture land and white painted worm fences. They moved close to the barn and hid in the shadows of a stable, watching admiringly as six of the most beautiful horses they had ever seen were being led up the ramp of a horse trailer.

"White man ride horses on his iron horse—?" Blazing Arrow whispered. "Me no understand."

"Maybe white man take'm ponies somewhere. Maybe place too far for ponies to ride."

"Such marvelous ponies!" Gray Eagle said. "Never have I seen such fine animals. They are indeed bred to ride as swiftly as the wind."

"Yes," Running Deer said. "They are made for racing."

Two stable hands, after they had secured the animals in the padded stalls inside the trailer, slid the ramp up and barred it into place, forming a door. Then they went around to the front of the trailer and climbed into the tractor cab. "Quick," Running Deer whispered, "we get in iron covered wagon. War Pony and I will kill the white men and make the driver take us to this place called Manhattan Island."

They darted across the open space and climbed silently into the trailer while Running Deer and War Pony stealthily approached the cab. Boldly tapping the man sitting beside the window on the shoulder, Running Deer beckoned to him. The man jerked around, staring at the Indian. He was speechless. Running Deer jerked the door open and a moment later the white man was dead. The second man was stopped from crying out in alarm by War Pony whose murderous blade severed his windpipe. Then they removed the bodies to the stable and carried them into a stall. War Pony took up a pitchfork and covered them with straw. Then the two warriors returned to the truck and climbed into the front seat.

"Can you make this iron horse go?" War Pony asked Running Deer.

"Me not sure," Running Deer said. "Stick on floor different and maybe it different driving with covered wagon in back."

At that moment they heard the driver approaching. He was heard slapping the trailer door to make certain it was secured and then he said, "You guys ready for the long haul to Churchill Downs?" He opened the door and entered but froze the moment he was behind the wheel, staring incredulously at War Pony and Running Deer.

War Pony's blade gleamed in the sunlight reflected through the windshield as he touched it to the side of the driver's throat. Running Deer looked at the man and said, "You drive now. We go north to this place called Manhattan Island in New York."

"Yes, sir! Anything you say!" the driver said, starting the engine and putting it into gear. "Just ask and I'll do it —only for Pete's sake, don't kill me, man. I'm not a hero. I only drive this rig and I couldn't care less what your reasons are for wanting me to take you to New York."

"Good, then we understand each other," Running Deer's voice sounded strangely relaxed.

They drove out of the farm and turned right toward a highway. A few miles further on they slowed at a cloverleaf intersection and, following the signs indicating they were approaching I-95, they soon were speeding along it, headed north.

Shortly after midnight they were on the outskirts of Washington, D.C. heading toward the Fourteenth Street

Bridge from the Virginia side going north. During the long hours of their drive up from Atlanta, neither the truck driver nor the two Indians exchanged more than a few words. The truck driver knew that if he wanted to stay alive he would have to keep his mouth shut and his eyes open. He had seen the blood in the cab and he guessed what had happened to the two grooms who were to have accompanied him to Kentucky.

As they reached the bridge, an army patrol wearing MP armbands and carrying service weapons and searchlights halted them. Both Running Deer and War Pony settled back against the cushion pretending to be asleep. The guard's uniform War Pony was still wearing was visible from the window on the driver's side.

"Where're you headed, mac?" an Army MP asked.

"New York. Six horses in the back."

The MP flashed his light inside the cab. The beam glinted off the badge upon War Pony's uniform. "Valuable horses, eh?" the MP said.

"Y-yes. The insurance company often sends guards——"

"Okay, move along, but don't stop anywhere in the Capital."

When they were on the road again, Running Deer asked the driver, "Why horse soldiers stop us?"

"I don't know. There's supposed to be an army of unknown alien invaders attacking the cities in the South. I guess this is normal for an emergency. They want to protect Washington the Capital from invaders——"

"This place is Washington where the White Father of the palefaces lives?"

The truck driver nodded, a bit confused because it had just dawned on him that his kidnapers who were hijacking him and the tractor and trailer were really primitive Indians.

"Where is teepee of the paleface chief?" Running Deer asked.

The truck driver pointed at the illuminated dome of the Capitol Building which could be seen at the end of the broad avenue along which they were driving. "He lives there," he said.

"We go there and take his scalp," War Pony said.

"You'd be shot down before you crossed the lawn," the truck driver said.

"You got'm horses in back? We ride'm horses up there and we not get shot."

"You're mad!" the driver said. "There're hundreds of soldiers and guards surrounding the Capitol. If we so much as stop this truck one of those patrols in tanks or jeeps will blast off at us."

"What is blast off?" War Pony asked.

The man looked at the Indian and replied, holding up his hand to pantomime a gun. "Bang, bang."

"Me savvy," War Pony said.

"I do something, then," Running Deer said. He opened the door and climbed out on the running board. Then he told the driver, "Go slow when we pass by chief's teepee. I will shoot arrows at it and burn flag on top of teepee."

He took out his bow and arrows and climbed to the top of the van. When he reached the center of the van he dropped to one knee and drew a pitch-dipped arrow which he fitted to the bowstring. When this was done, he struck the flame of the lighter and touched it to the black arrowhead. Then taking aim, drawing the string back as far as necessary to send the flamming shaft the distance to the flag, he fired. The arrow arced through the air and struck the shaft just below the flag. Sparks flew up and ignited the flag that always flies above the Capitol.

When Running Deer climbed back down to the cab, the driver gaped at him in amazement. "You did it—you really did it. Even a marksman with a 'scope couldn't have shot the flag from this distance——"

Running Deer was flattered. As they drove by the White House along Pennsylvania Avenue, guards inside the gates could be seen scurrying about. In the distance the sound of approaching fire engines was heard.

"Where is Manhattan Island?" War Pony asked.

"Four, maybe five hours north of here. We should make it by dawn." He glanced toward them and asked, "Don't you guys ever get sleepy?"

"We no sleep," War Pony said.

"Well, I'm plenty tired," the driver said. "We'll stop when we cross the Maryland line. I could use a cup of coffee and a couple hours' sleep."

"No sleep. Drive," Running Deer said.

"We're almost out of fuel. We'll have to stop for that. This rig burns diesel fuel."

"What that?" War Pony asked.

"Fuel? It makes the truck go."

"What truck?"

"This thing we're riding in," the driver said, flabbergasted now to discover how limited in knowledge his kidnapers were.

"Fuel." Running Deer said the word for the first time. He thought a moment and explained to War Pony, "That fire water stuff the iron horse drinks to make'm ride."

Twenty minutes later they pulled off the highway onto a drive that led to a truck stop and parked in front of the diesel pumps. The driver opened the door as if to get out but War Pony's blade stopped him. War Pony moved behind the wheel and said, "You no try to get away or I kill you. Now go. We go in there while man puts fire water in iron horse."

The driver quickly exhaled and said, "Okay, okay, I won't try anything. I just have to use the bathroom and then maybe get a bite to eat and something to drink. Would you guys like something to drink?"

"No drink," Running Deer said. He glanced at War Pony and said, "You watch'm like hawkeye. If he tries to run, kkkk'd," he said, making a diagonal slash with his forefinger across his throat.

War Pony grinned.

The driver walked a little unsteadily toward the diner. As they reached the doorway, with War Pony right behind, a gas station attendant emerged. The driver told him to fill the tank with diesel fuel and then they entered the diner. When they walked to the rear and entered the rest rooms, War Pony stared at his reflection in the mirror and made faces at himself. But then the soap dispenser and the water faucets caught his eye and he played with them for several minutes until the driver was ready to leave. They entered the diner and seated themselves at a booth. A waitress came over and peered curiously at War Pony and at his ill-fitting uniform. She looked away when War Pony gave her a vicious stare.

The driver ordered. A few minutes later the girl returned with sandwiches and soda pop.

War Pony looked at the glass of soda and grabbed it. He tasted it and made a wry face. "Argh! Water that taste like grape and bubble like crazy water. You paleface people no got sense. Why you no drink goat milk or eat chicken egg?"

"I didn't feel like eating milk and eggs."

"You no eat'm here. Me no like this place. Give'm squaw wampum and bring food to iron horse. We must go."

The driver picked up his sandwich, then walked to the cash register. The waitress accepted a banknote and gave him change. He tipped her and they went out, arriving at the gasoline and diesel fuel island just as the attendant finished filling the tank.

The driver gave him the money in exact change and then he and War Pony returned to the cab beside Running Deer. As the driver started the engine, War Pony asked Running Deer, "We maybe ought to take some scalps while we are here?"

"No," Running Deer said. "We must go to the great council and lose no more time. By sunrise we will be almost there."

"Why we no burn'm up fire water like last places?"

"We will attract too much attention and the long-knives might stop us. They are many and we are few."

The conversation was not understood by the truck driver as it was in Running Deer's native Choctaw. As he drove the vehicle, steering with one hand and biting into his sandwich with the other, he tried to concentrate only on the road and not think about what the Indians might possibly do to him when they reached their destination. He had given up all hope of trying to escape for he had seen Running Deer shoot the arrow and set the flag afire and he knew that anyone as skilled as that with a bow would certainly not let him run far before bringing him down.

It was a few minutes before dawn when the horse van left the New Jersey turnpike exit and turned onto the road leading to the Lincoln Tunnel. Just as they slowed down and navigated the turn leading to the toll gate, a black-and-white police car with blue light on the roof flashing, pulled alongside and an officer with a bullhorn ordered them to stop.

"Why long-knife stop'm us?" War Pony asked.

"I don't know," said the driver in a hoarse voice. He was weary beyond endurance and could not see clearly. He pulled to the side of the road and stopped, setting the handbrake.

The two officers left their vehicle and approached them. When they reached the truck cab they peered inside at the driver and the two Indians beside him. "Will you three step outside and stand beside the truck with your hands raised?"

"We didn't do anything, officer," protested the driver. "These men are the grooms who're along to take care of the horses in the van."

"Step down, please." The driver stepped down and held his hands up. One of the officers searched him swiftly and then nodded to War Pony. "Now you come down here and do likewise."

War Pony slipped the knife out of its sheath into the palm of his hand, the handle concealed by the uniform coat sleeve. Running Deer hid his tomahawk beneath his vest and began to slide out the driver's side, following War Pony.

Suddenly, War Pony yelled and tackled the officer nearest him. Running Deer leaped on the other man and whipped out his tomahawk. Seconds later they were standing over the two dead bodies of the policemen.

"Why long-knives stop'm us?" War Pony demanded of the driver.

The driver, sickened by the bloodied bodies at their feet and the killings he had just seen perpetrated, retched and held onto the side of the truck to keep his balance. "I t-told you before," he stammered, "I don't have any idea why they stopped us. Maybe somebody found the grooms you guys killed and they radioed that this van was missing. Maybe that's why they stopped us."

Sharp Tomahawk, Cold Wind, Blazing Arrow, and Gray Eagle climbed out of the back, stretching their limbs and looking at Running Deer and War Pony, their gazes questioning.

Running Deer deliberated over what the driver had said. Then he turned to the others and told them: "Take'm down board so horses can come out. Then we ride'm rest of way to the Indian nations in Manhattan."

He paused and turned toward the driver. "Where Manhattan Island now?"

The driver pointed. "That way. You go through the tunnel and it brings you up in New York—Manhattan Island."

"We no go over bridge or ride ferry boat?" War Pony asked.

"No," the driver said. "That is a tunnel and it goes under the river into the city."

"Tunnel under the river!" Sharp Tomahawk said. "Why we no drown?"

"Air goes in there and no water gets in. Nobody drowns. It's just like a street that goes underwater, that's all."

"We go now," Running Deer said, watching as Blazing Arrow and Gray Eagle put the ramp into place as they had seen the grooms do, and then begin to lead the horses down it to the highway. Cars passing by slowed to avoid hitting them. Curious people stared through the car windows as they drove by.

As each Indian mounted a horse, Running Deer told the driver, "We keep our bargain and no kill you—if you will do as we say."

"Anything!" the man cried in relief. "Just name it and I'll do it."

"That tunnel has two roads, one going, one coming. You drive this covered wagon into the road coming this way and block road. We will ride the road going. Now do as we say."

Blazing Arrow held the horse for Running Deer as Running Deer swung up to its back. Then the driver jumped into the cab of the tractor and started the engine. He gave the bodies of the dead policemen one quick glance and spurred the vehicle forward, driving across the divider and heading the wrong way toward the tunnel. When he reached the tunnel entrance, several cars coming toward him jammed on their brakes and crashed into the tile finished walls. The driver, jamming on his air brakes, was unable to stop the rig as it jack-knifed and slammed one vehicle and then the next before it piled up crosswise in the tunnel, jammed between the two walls so firmly that it would require heavy equipment and cranes to remove it.

With that, Running Deer gave his men the signal and they began to ride their animals at a full gallop toward the other entrance. Startled guards looked up and shouted for them to stop, but Gray Eagle and Blazing Arrow silenced them with well-aimed arrows as they rode by. Hooves clicking eerily inside the tunnel, the war party rode wildly toward the city, shouting their war cries and expressing the newly discovered freedom of riding the beautiful ponies that ran swifter than any Indian pony they had ever mounted.

Suddenly, from the entrance about a thousand yards behind them, they heard the powerful roar of an engine in pursuit. Running Deer turned around and saw a Sherman tank following them. He shouted a warning to the others, "My brothers! Beware of the iron buffalo that chases us. I see a cannon sticking from its head like a giant nose."

Sharp Tomahawk stared over his shoulder and cried, "I will kill it then. I have some of the fire flour in my pocket. It will destroy the iron buffalo." He drew up and wheeled the horse around. Then he jumped off the animal and leaped up to the catwalk that ran along the side of the tunnel. He flattened against the floor and slid under the railing, ready to spring upon the back of the tank when it was abreast.

The tank rumbled right up to him and he leaped. Then, kneeling as it continued its pursuit of the other braves, he withdrew a pouch and untied the string which closed it. He shook the contents out above a small slit in the front just below the top and spat on it. The liquid saliva ignited the phosphorus at once and as it began to sizzle, the brave leaped off the top of the tank and climbed down to the rear. He clung to it and then noticed the exhaust pipe. He drew around the vehicle until he could reach the exhaust pipe and then tore off a sleeve of his vest and balled it up. Then he stuffed the sleeve into the exhaust pipe. Almost at once the engine of the tank began to miss and slow down until it stopped completely. Climbing back to the top of the tank, he drew his tomahawk back and waited for the door to open. A moment later the round hatch of steel opened and a helmeted soldier started to climb out. Sharp Tomahawk's weapon struck a vital spot and the man died instantly. Then the Indian pulled him out and rolled his body over the side, crouching again at the ready, his hand clenched around the handle of the tomahawk awaiting his next victim.

A moment later the second man inside the tank began to emerge. Before he had been able to get half of his body up out of the hatch, the tomahawk slashed him fatally across the head. Sharp Tomahawk caught his body and dragged him up and out of the hatch. Then he rolled him over the side to the floor of the tunnel. He climbed over the hatch and lowered himself into the tank just as Running Deer and the others rode over and checked their horses.

"What you do in there?" Running Deer asked.

"I hear other iron buffalos coming. I will kill them with the nose cannon. Arrows no good against iron buffalo."

Inside the tank Sharp Tomahawk found the crank that turned the cannon. He had seen the French and the English load and fire their cannon and he had a vague idea of how it was done; however, this was different. In a rack beside the gun breech he found many shells. Then he turned the crank handle and the cannon turret began to move around. He continued to crank it until the muzzle of the cannon was pointing in the direction they had entered the tunnel. He then found the triggering mechanism and squeezed it. A resounding explosion reverberated inside the tank and the tunnel as a shell left the cannon and the breech opened to eject the spent casing. He removed the casing and put another shell in the chamber and slapped the breech into place. Through the slits of the turret he could see the olive green tank approaching. He cranked the handle and squeezed the trigger. An armor-piercing shell ripped into the tank and exploded. There followed many smaller explosions as the explosives and fuel inside the approaching tank blew up.

Sharp Tomahawk climbed up out of the hatch and jumped down to the back of the animal Running Deer was riding. Then they rode up the sloping incline of the tunnel toward the horse Sharp Tomahawk had been riding that the others were holding for him. When they reached the animal and Sharp Tomahawk mounted it, there was a fearful roar behind them. They turned and saw the tunnel beginning to collapse. The walls had caved in from the force of the exploding tank which had been hit. Angry torrents of water began to gush into the tunnel, flooding it. "Ride, my brothers!" Running Deer cried, wheeling his horse around and kicking it in the sides with his heels. "The river! It is flooding this place."

Riding like the wind, they galloped out of the tunnel and found themselves in the city. Looking up at the great buildings that seemed to rise up like canyon walls, they proceeded through the streets in single file, riding around trucks and cabs and passenger cars which were crowding the streets. When they reached Fifth Avenue they saw for the first time the Empire State Building towering like a needle-topped mountain piercing the morning sky, the sunlight glinting off its thousands of glass windows.

"We go there and scout for the village of our brothers," Running Deer said, leading the way toward the building. When they reached the entrance a few minutes later, they dismounted on the crowded sidewalk, impervious to the gaping stares of the passers-by.

Leaving War Pony and Gray Eagle in charge of the horses, Running Deer and the others entered the building and approached one of the uniformed men standing beside the bank of elevators. "How we get'm to top of this mountain teepee?" Running Deer asked.

The man, immune to the many strange dialects, languages, and dress of the thousands of visitors to the building each year, pointed at one of the elevators. "That will take you up."

Running Deer and the others entered the elevator, staring now at the people crowded around them. Two women stifled screams when they saw their leathery faces and weapons and the bloodied scalps dangling from their belts. Sharp Tomahawk glared at them and they cringed backward into a corner. A man on the elevator pretended not to have noticed and he looked up at the ceiling, humming to himself. A second man calmly stood paring his fingernails. He was a native New Yorker and nothing surprised him, especially the strange sights one sees on the streets and in the public buildings daily.

Running Deer, speaking in his native tongue, told the others, "This is the island where our brothers have their great council so we must not take scalps here or kill the paleface until we have their permission. A long time has passed since we slept the long sleep and many things have changed as you can see. Perhaps our brothers and the children of our children's children have made peace with the paleface."

"Aye, Running Deer," Cold Wind said. "You are wise. This indeed is a strange place. But I cannot understand how our brothers could make their camp in this place with so many noises and no fields or grass or trees or game to hunt and so many thousands of palefaces everywhere you look—and these wikkiups in the sky—no Indian could live here."

"Yes, that is why we ride to top of teepee to scout the countryside and so see over the tops of the buildings the place where their village must surely be."

The elevator stopped and the doors sloughed open. Running Deer and the others stepped out and walked down the corridor to the glass partitions which opened on the roof overlook. They stood by the wall gazing down at the city. Awed by the density of the many buildings and the view, they were speechless for some time until Running Deer saw the green expanse of Central Park in the distance. "Look. There must be the village of our brothers. Why else would the paleface leave the fields and the trees and the water of a lake in the center of all these stone teepees?"

"We go there at once!" Sharp Tomahawk cried, turning and knocking over several people who got in his way. A man picked himself up from the floor and shouted, "You clumsy dope-head hippie! I oughta——"

He raised his hand as though to strike Sharp Tomahawk.

An instant later the Indian's knife was buried in the man's chest. Then Sharp Tomahawk withdrew his blade and caught the man as he toppled amid the terrified screams of his wife and other onlookers. He lifted him above his head, carried him to the parapet and hurled him over the railing. Two uniformed security guards rushed Sharp Tomahawk, but Running Deer and Cold Wind stepped forward and dispatched them with their tomahawks. Then both Indians lifted the dead and dying guards into the air and threw them over the edge of the railing.

Panic-stricken people tried to escape, screaming and fighting to get away from the maddened Indians. Within moments, no one was left alive on the roof. Running Deer and his braves killed them during a brief frenzy of slaughter. When it was over the floors were crimson.

"Come, my brothers," Running Deer said, wiping his blade on his buckskin leggings. "We go now. The village must be in that forest we saw."

"But we must take scalps," Blazing Arrow said, bending over the body of a red-haired woman.

"No, let her be. We would not want our brothers to think we were the ones who did this just in case they have given the palefaces on this island their protection."

Blazing Arrow reluctantly stood up. He would have liked to add the beautiful red-haired scalp to his collection, but he dared not disobey Running Deer. He replaced the blade in its sheath and followed them toward the elevators.

Seven

Julie opened the door to her hotel suite and looked at Eric without smiling. "Oh," she said in a dull tone, "it's you." She swung the door open for him and turned her back to walk toward the sofa. She sat down wearily and sighed, watching as he closed the door after him and came toward her. "And to what do I owe this unexpected visit—at *this* hour?"

"It's only a couple minutes past midnight," he said, sitting opposite her in a lounge chair. "I didn't think you'd be asleep yet."

"Who can sleep?" she said. "God knows the frustration of not being believed is bad enough—but when the man who says he loves you won't even listen to reason——"

She looked at him for a long moment, then picked up a newspaper from the coffee table and held it up so he could see the headlines on the front page.

"*Alien invaders now occupy the entire east coast from Georgia to New York. Thousands flee cities. Prison in Atlanta raided and alien collaborators freed. Carnage on the highways. Lincoln Tunnel blown up,*" Julie read aloud, her voice becoming emotional as she continued. "*Train commandeered; dangerous cargoes stolen; the White House attacked and the American Flag shot down and burned. People hurled to their deaths from tall buildings after being mutilated and brutally slain. Blood flows on the streets of New Orleans, Atlanta, New York,* *Washington, D.C. Birmingham, Alabama blasted off the face of the map and hundreds of thousands dead, missing, and wounded in parts of several states.*" She stopped reading aloud and hurled the newspaper aside.

After a moment she regained her composure and glared at him. "Not one word about eyewitness reports of *who* the so-called alien invaders are—or what they look like—or what sort of clothing they wear and what sort of weapons they've been using to commit all this mayhem and carnage."

Eric did not smile.

"And how are your men doing? Have they learned anything?" she inquired testily.

"Yes, they learned quite a bit."

"For instance?"

"It's classified—top secret."

"Ho, ho ho," Julie mocked. "So why tell me that much?"

"I had to clear it with the Secretary."

"You mean," she said, pausing, eying him warily, "that this is an *official* visit?"

"You might say that."

"Explain yourself," she said, folding her arms across her bosom and watching him with amusement crinkling her eyes.

Eric cleared his throat and shifted his feet. Then he cracked his knuckles and permitted his hands to drop to the arms of the chair. His fingers slowly traced the contour of the chair arm and, speaking in a low voice, his gaze averted, he said: "After analyzing the reports from the various areas where encounters with the aliens have been made, the Secretary decided to leave no stone unturned in the effort to get at the bottom of what's been happening and to smoke the alien forces out into the open. So far, we've not been able to get a lead on them, where their headquarters are, where they're planning to attack next, and so forth. In every case, where deaths of military personnel and civilians have been reported, there have been vague reports that—" he broke off and cleared his throat and looked at her rather sheepishly. "Reports that strange-looking men who appeared to be—of all things—Indian braves right out of the past—were the attackers."

"I'm not going to say I told you so—" Julie cried. "I'm going to shout it at you! What have I been trying to tell you all along?"

He seemed quite embarrassed and his face darkened. "Okay, rub my nose in it. Now, as I was saying. In light of the facts that Indians—or soldiers disguised as American Indian braves of another era—have been perpetrating all these hostile acts against the United States—and in light of the fact that primitive weapons were used in every case—except that which blew up the federal penitentiary at Atlanta, the H-bomb explosion that wiped out Birmingham and the area in the two states surrounding the city, and the explosion that destroyed the Lincoln Tunnel here in New York a few hours before we were ordered to return here this morning—the Secretary and the members of the board of inquiry decided to have a go at your theory, no matter how absurd it seemed to them. They could not afford to overlook one possibility, so the Secretary had the Smithsonian people who are experts in Indian lore and so forth, study the photographic reports you had made."

"And they found I was right?"

He was blushing deeply now as he averted his gaze again and nodded. "Yes. They convinced the Secretary that your theory is not entirely without foundation and there is a good possibility there's something to it. There've been other instances in which Indians were known to have 'slept the long sleep' and awakened many months or years later after 'hibernating' like the bear. However, this is the first time they've heard of Indians sleeping or in a state of suspended animation for so long a time as you claim—a hundred and forty years. What's more, they found references in the archives of Indian folklore to a legend that fourteen warriors were hidden away in a burial mound somewhere in the land of the Natchez or the Choctaw. According to the legend—and they bear out what you told me and the Secretary—the 'sleeping' warriors were to be awakened by the shaman who was sent to watch over their graves at such time when the 'white man's soft fat belly was exposed and he would be vulnerable to attack.' At that time they would rise up from the grave after magic seeds were sprinkled on the soil and would rally together all the Indian nations who would then hold a pow-wow after which they would amass their warriors into vast armies and then attack the white man and drive him from the soil of America. Of course, the people at the Smithsonian said this was purely a legend—but who really knows? You may be right. Although it is *too* fantastic to be believed—"

Julie looked at him, a grim smile compressing her lips. "Is that all?"

"Yes. That about sums it up."

"There was no mention about robes made from the hides of buffalo?"

Eric sat forward abruptly on the edge of his chair. He peered at her, a rather surprised expression on his face. "How did you know about the buffalo robes?"

"You seem especially keen on that," she observed. "What's the matter? Wasn't I supposed to know about them?"

"It isn't that. A zoo was raided by the invaders and seven buffalo were killed and skinned. The hides were found hidden in the park——"

"Where are those hides now?"

"In Atlanta at my headquarters where all the eveidence has been collected and catalogued."

Julie sighed as though somewhat relieved. "Then there must be something to that parchment I interpreted."

"What are you talking about?"

She reached into her briefcase which was leaning against the sofa and withdrew several large photographs. "I didn't show these to the Secretary at the time I appeared before the board because I didn't really know what they were until the other day." She paused and turned one of the photos around so he could see it. "This one was on birch bark pegged to the wall near the niche where the shaman sat guarding the mounds inside the kiva. According to this, if it became necessary to return the resurrected warriors to their graves so their spirits could rejoin those of their ancestors in that Happy Hunting Ground in the sky, each warrior could be put to sleep forever only if he was first cloaked in a robe made from the hide of a buffalo which was then sprinkled with a few drops of the clearest, cleanest of pure water from a sparkling stream. If the water is in any way unclear or unclean, the spell of life could not be broken and they would go on killing and plundering and taking scalps."

"Are you saying that's the only way to stop them?"

"They cannot die. Perhaps they can be crippled, but they can't die unless that is done, yes."

"My God! You can't be serious. This is too fantastic—too absurd to be real."

"Nevertheless, it's true."

"We've got to stop them. How're we going to do that?"

"By finding them and somehow putting the robes you've got on them and sprinkling water over them."

"There's no other way?"

"You might try another H-bomb. That seemed to get rid of some of them."

"But how many are left?" Eric asked.

"I'm not sure. I think there are only five or six. Chances are they split into two war parties and went their separate ways to meet in the land of their children's children's children where the great council of war is to be called. Perhaps they can be headed off there."

"Are you saying that only a handful—six Indians—have been doing all that mayhem and murder——?"

"Yes."

"But the panic. The slaughter on the highways. The hijacking of a train. The killing of all those guards at the Atlanta penitentiary—all those riots in the cities—the wholesale exodus of thousands—maybe by now, millions—from their homes—the burning of the flag atop the Capitol—the destruction of the Lincoln Tunnel—all those people hurled to their deaths after being hacked to pieces atop the Empire State Building—*all that was done by just six walking dead men?*"

"Yes—all that was done by them."

"Impossible. There must be thousands of them on the march."

"The facts are exaggerated out of proportion."

"We can't believe that."

"Oh no? Then how about what happened when that strangler was loose in Boston? Didn't a near-panic almost take place there? Thanks to the license of the news media to make a sensation out of the deeds perpetrated by a half-dozen Indians, a state of national emergency now exists."

"But the capture of that B-52 and the triggering of the H-bomb in the skies that erased Birmingham from the map—surely, that couldn't have been perpetrated by just a handful of Indians with primitive weapons?"

"Ah, but it was," she said. "During the past years how many hijackers commandeered airliners with just a single weapon—and how many bomb threats and the like were perpetrated by just a single individual? I'll grant you the SAC base is adequately guarded and there are detectors and radar in place there to sound an alarm the moment infiltrators approach near the air base boundaries—but isn't it possible that only five or six Indians managed to get aboard that aircraft and then after killing the crewmen with their tomahawks and knives, detonated the H-bomb by accident?"

"That's possible—that they could board the aircraft—but set the bomb off—never."

"Why do you say, *never?*"

"The fail-safe mechanism that triggers it is absolutely foolproof."

"That's *their* story," Julie said. "I wouldn't know an H-bomb if I tripped over it, nor would I know a so-called fail-safe mechanism. But I'll bet you that I could trigger the bomb to explode if I was curious enough like those Indians must've been about the fail-safe mechanism to give it a few whacks with my trusty tomahawk—which is probably just what happened over Birmingham."

Eric smiled and leaned back in his chair. "Julie," he said, "you ought to be running my operation—not me. If there's anything to this harebrained theory that only six Indians have practically brought this entire country to the verge of hysteria, I'll give up my career and become an archaeologist like you."

She laughed. "My dear," she said, "I'm going to hold you to that."

"I mean it," he said. Then, folding his hands before him and sitting forward again, he added: "The Secretary has ordered me to do anything that is humanly possible to bring this reign of terror to an end—even if it means taking your theory seriously and flying those robes up to wherever the Indians are and——"

"I'll help you, darling," she said, cutting him short. "But only if you promise to stop scoffing at all this. I know it's farfetched and beyond belief—but it happens to be true. We've got to try and stop the war party before they commit any more murders—and before they actually get to the tribes on the reservations or wherever they're headed. If they should make contact with the Indians on the reservations, the odds are they might actually bring an Indian uprising and an armed conflict into being. I'm certain there are enough red men around who are sick and tired of being treated like they are, herded like cattle onto reservations and so forth—who will join the resurrected warriors. The fact that they have been resurrected and *are* from the past—a virtual legend come true—will become a catalyst that is certain to bring into being a major uprising of terrible proportions. But I won't give you a speech about that. I'm certain the Secretary has discussed this with you already."

"It was mentioned."

Julie laughed. "I love the way you make anthills out of mountains when you ought to be doing the opposite."

"So what next, Miss Expert on the affairs of dead Indians?"

"I'll ignore that," she said. "I think we've got to find out where the Indians are now. We know they arrived here in New York this morning after destroying the Lincoln Tunnel. Why they came here instead of heading straight for the Indian reservations west of the Mississippi, I don't know. But I'm sure there must be a reason. How about letting me see all the intelligence you've gathered so far? I'd like to study the reports and also interrogate any witnesses. Surely, there must be dozens of people who saw them downtown——"

"Yes, there were. And yes, I'll let you see anything in the files." He got up, stretched, and said, "Get your coat. It was raining when I came up. The data is now at the Armory and we'll never get through it all sitting here talking about it."

She jumped up and went to the closet for her coat. He helped her on with it and then tried to turn her round so he could kiss her. She resisted and held herself aloof, neck stiff, her head unbending. With a firm hand she pushed him gently away. "Please, not now."

He read the meaning in her tone of voice and expression and released her with reluctance. "Why're you carrying your peeve this far?"

"Who's peeved?"

"Aren't you?"

She laughed and opened the door. Then she took him by the hand and pulled him into the corridor and closed the door. When they stepped from the elevator several minutes later and walked through the deserted lobby, they heard the sound of sirens and military vehicles speeding past the building. Eric paused a moment and stopped her before they went out into the street. He removed two ID badges from his pocket and pinned one on her coat and the other on his lapel.

"The MPs will let us pass when they see these."

"This martial law and curfew—it's ridiculous!" she said with vehemence. "A handful of Indians and they've got the entire country on the verge of hysteria and panic."

"We haven't proved yet that we're *not* facing the sophisticated armies of some alien invader."

"And no one's proved it was more than just a handful of Indians armed with primitive weapons."

"Please, Julie," he said as they hurried around the corner and walked east toward the Armory, "let's not quarrel about this anymore. Regardless of which one of us is right, this thing has to be resolved—and soon. Already the hysteria has all but wrecked the country with people barricading themselves in their houses and others taking to the streets and highways, abandoning their homes. The airports have closed down, the trains and buses are no longer running, and the curfew violators arrested so far number in the hundreds of thousands. In some cities —especially the ghettoes—there is wholesale burning and looting. It's worse than ever now and there're rumors in Washington that all civil rights will be revoked until the emergency is over. The efforts to muzzle or at least censor the press have been meaningless. They continue to print and broadcast and telecast the bad news and this has been heightening the panic."

"I knew it was bad," she said. They broke into a run to cross the street between a convoy of Army trucks carrying uniformed National Guardsmen and Army regulars. "But I had no idea it was *that* bad."

"An irresponsible press is largely to blame. But so far there hasn't been a single newspaper or television or radio station or wire service that has reported the releases the Secretary issued on behalf of the board of inquiry. He has reported that the possibility exists that we are not under attack by alien fighting men—but instead may be facing an insurrection by Communist sympathizers who are seeking the overthrow of the United States Government by a reign of terror calculated to strike us in the underbelly. He also has issued bulletins in which the facts were given as we know them: that many civilians and police personnel were injured or maimed or slain by primitive weapons."

"Did the papers carry those bulletins?"

"No," Eric said, escorting her into the Armory after they stopped to permit the MP sentries to compare their badges with their photographs and to record the names and numbers appearing under their pictures.

They moved through several other sentry posts, each time pausing for the security check. Finally they arrived in a large room in which many high-ranking officers from all branches of the military were seated at a long table before a map of the United States which was mounted on the wall. Many lights were blinking all over the southern portion of the map and a light was also burning over Washington. Five lights blinked on and off over a map of the City of New York.

"When last seen," the voice of an announcer was heard over the loudspeakers, "the enemy force had left Fifth Avenue where they had looted a number of shops and smashed store windows, and were riding their horses into Central Park."

"*Horses?*" Julie gasped.

"The enemy force," the announcer continued, "is estimated to number at less than division size. Elements Five, Six, Eight, and Twelve of the National Guard, the Marines, and the Army centralized combat units are now converging on the park, sealing off all exits and securing it with a cordon of armored personnel carriers, tanks, and half-tracks."

"Yes," Eric replied to Julie's surprised one-word question. "They commandeered a horse van in Georgia and forced the driver to take them to New York."

"Naturally they passed through Washington, D.C.?" Julie enquired.

Eric nodded. "Naturally."

"How many horses were in the van?"

He gave her a feeble grin. "Six."

"And the announcer just said that a force of the enemy estimated to number *less* than division strength is now occupying Central Park?"

"Don't stand there smirking," Eric said, glancing around at the generals and other military men who were looking up at them as they walked in. "This isn't funny."

"They're playing games. Like little boys playing soldiers—cowboys and Indians."

"They are not playing games," Eric said. "The H-bomb explosion that wiped out half of three states is no game. They don't know what they're up against."

"The H-bomb explosion—they brought that upon themselves by not having the right security and protective devices——"

"Julie, for God's sake, stop that. Right now we've a job to do—and that's to convince these people in this war room that we're only hunting down a half-dozen savages——"

"They're not savages," Julie said.

"All right, they're resurrected warriors. What's the difference? All that matters is that we've got them boxed in now and in a little while all hell's going to bust loose."

"They'll never catch them that way."

"Have you a better idea?"

"Yes. How soon can you have those buffalo robes brought here?"

"In a few hours."

"Then send for them."

He looked at her and asked, "Why?"

"It's the bait. It's the only thing that will put a stop to all this."

He picked up a phone and dialed the Atlanta area code, then the number of the security headquarters. He told his aide what he wanted and ordered him to personally bring the buffalo robes to the New York City Armory. "It's top priority. Call Air Force Intelligence and they'll send a chopper for you and then jet you to New York. I'll expect you in less than two hours."

The command-post announcer's voice was heard over the loudspeakers again: "Helicopters carrying searchlights are now sweeping the park. Two pilots report being fired upon by missiles."

"What type missiles?" a four-star Air Force general shouted into the microphone. "I want as much information as they can give me. This is the first report we've had that surface-to-air missiles are in the hands of the invaders."

A moment later the voice of one of the helicopter pilots was heard. The roar of the rotor blades and the engine was clearly heard also as he spoke. "Sir, we were at fifty feet altitude making a sweep of Grid Three when four or five flaming missiles narrowly missed the fuselage of my ship. We took evasive action and are now hovering above Central Park West awaiting further orders."

"What has the helicopter pilot in the other ship to report?" the general demanded. His voice was terse, urgent, and he sat hunched over the microphone like a man about to pounce on a victim.

"Sir," the voice of the second pilot was heard, "a slow-moving missile tracked us and glanced off the bubble just as I executed an evasive maneuver. It appeared to be several feet long and trailed a long fiery vapor trail. It must've been a dud because it glanced off and disintegrated in a shower of sparks. We've never seen that type missile before, sir. My co-pilot concurs that we're up against some new type of weaponry we've never encountered before. At the present moment we are hovering above ground station six."

"Maintain your present positions," the general said. "Await further orders." He switched off the microphone and turned to huddle with several other officers. Maps were produced showing every detail of Central Park. Two armed guards wheeled in a large table upon which was a twenty-foot oval display of Central Park in relief showing all the roads, hills, trees, the lake and the playgrounds in detail.

Eric looked at Julie as they seated themselves behind a table piled high with confidential reports his office of

Federal Security had compiled. "Well? Now what do you have to say about your theory that we're facing just a handful of primitive savages?"

"Savages, they're not," she said coldly, putting him down with an icy stare. "And as for the so-called military observers, I think they ought to have their eyes examined. They probably saw arrows with burning pitch fired at them. It was just such an arrow that most likely burned the flag over the Capitol and it was *not*, I repeat, *it was not* a missile with a warhead or anything more sophisticated than a simple Indian arrow."

"Julie, what am I to do with you? Why can't you be sensible for once? Surely, all these generals and admirals and the thousands of troops out there can't be mounting a defense of this magnitude against six Indians? There has to be more than that. There must be thousands of them out there."

Julie glared at him. "Don't be a fool. So far as we know no one has seen them—or have they?"

"Yes, there was the driver of the horse van they hijacked and made drive them here. He's being interrogated by G-2 right now."

"I'd like to question him," she said.

"All right," Eric answered with a sigh. "But I don't see what good that will do. He'll probably confirm everything we already know."

"You mean," she said, rising, "everything you *don't* already know, but *think* you know."

Eric was beginning to lose his patience. He stood up abruptly and motioned for her to follow. Then he led the way through the war room to the exit where they passed through several doors and then halted before a green door guarded by two sentries with submachine guns.

The guards challenged them and ordered them to stop. Eric identified himself and asked to be admitted to the interrogation room. One guard peered at his ID for some time and then went through the green door. Several minutes later he returned and said, "You can come in now."

They entered a small room in which there were eight uniformed men questioning a bleary-eyed, haggard-looking man in blue shirt and dungarees.

One of the officers present nodded at Eric but gave Julie a hostile glance. A captain of Intelligence was just asking the witness a question: "You mean to sit there and tell us that you made no attempt to escape from your kidnapers during all the hours you were together driving up from Georgia?"

"Yes, sir. They would've killed me if I'd tried anything. They had arrows and knives and tomahawks."

"Did yo usee these arrows and knives and tomahawks?"

"Yes, sir. I told the other officers that I saw them. I'm not much of an expert on Indians, but I know a tomahawk when I see one. It's like a hatchet with feather adornments."

"What about the arrows?"

"Well," the man sighed wearily, his voice hoarse from lack of sleep and the ordeal of being interrogated, "they had many arrows in these little bags like miniature golf bags made of deerskin or chamois on their backs."

"Quivers. They call them quivers."

"Yes, sir. Like I was saying, they had arrows made of long thin sticks and stone or flint arrowheads on them. The arrows were point down in the quivers they had on their backs. There were all kinds of feathers sticking out of the other ends, the ends that fit into the bowstring."

"What color feathers?"

"I can't say. They looked like turkey feathers to me. But I don't know what a turkey looks like—the feathers of a turkey, I mean—so I can't say for certain."

"What about the arrows? Did you see them shoot anyone?"

"No, not really. They did shoot the flag on top of the Capitol building in Washington when we passed by it on the way to New York."

"You mean you parked the truck and they stood up and——"

"No, sir," he said, interrupting. "The Indian they called Running Deer got up on the roof of the van when we drove down Pennsylvania Avenue and he lit the end and shot it at the flag."

"He only shot *one* arrow from *that* distance and hit the flag?"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't believe you. You're lying. It's impossible. They must've been using those new-type missiles we heard they're deploying."

Julie looked at Eric in exasperation. She whispered, "This isn't an interrogation—it's an inquisition! Do you have the authority to send these bumbling bungling military experts out of here so I can talk to this man and get some intelligent answers?"

Eric nodded. He went over to the captain who seemed to be in charge and whispered in his ear. Then the captain turned around and glared at Julie. He stood up and said in a low voice to the others, "Let's take a coffee break. These people want to take over for a while."

The other officers got up and filed out, casting curious looks at Julie and Eric.

Finally, when they were alone with the man, Eric said, "This is Miss Julie Chambers. I'm Eric Douglas with the Office of Federal Security. We won't try to tax your patience, sir—but there are a few questions we must ask which are of paramount importance. You understand?"

"Yes," he said with a stifled yawn.

"Sir," Julie began, "how many Indians were there who abducted you?"

"Two were in the cab of the rig. They must've killed the two grooms who were to accompany me to Kentucky. Later, when we finally arrived at the Jersey side of the Lincoln Tunnel, four others climbed out of the van and they took the horses and rode off, after forcing me to block the west-bound lane of the Lincoln Tunnel with the truck."

"And you did that?"

"Yes."

"You're certain there were only six of them?"

"I'm positive."

"Did you happen to overhear them talking about why they were here and where they were going and what they were going to do?"

"No, not all of it. I did catch a word now and then, but they spoke so softly."

"What did you hear?" Julie asked him.

He replied, "They were going to some pow-wow with other Indians at the United Nations, I think."

"The United Nations!?" Julie cried, glancing at Eric and then back at the witness.

"Yes, ma'am," he replied shaking his head up and down. "That's what they said."

"Why did they let you go?"

"I guess because I didn't try to pry in their business and because I did everything they asked."

"Can you tell us if you noticed anything peculiar about these Indians?"

"Yes," he said. "They had a very musty odor about them—like when you smell the inside of a tomb or a grave or something like that. They had strange-colored skin, reddish brown—and they didn't drink or eat anything during all the time we were together. I thought this was real strange—them not eating or drinking anything. They didn't seem human, if you get what I mean."

"Explain what you mean?" Eric interrupted Julie before she could ask him another question.

"Well, they didn't seem to be breathing like ordinary people. They sat real still like they were corpses. Once, when one of them grabbed me, I noticed his hand was cold and dry and when my finger rested for a couple of seconds against his wrist, I didn't feel a pulse."

"Do you recall which Indian that was?"

"Yes, ma'am," he said. "It was War Pony. The other guy in the cab with me—the one who shot the flag over the Capitol—his name was Running Deer."

"Did you happen to catch the names of the other Indians?"

"No, ma'am."

"What else can you tell us about these Indians?"

"Well, there were a lot of funny things about them. I don't know why the Army guys refused to believe this—but it's true. They didn't seem to know anything. They didn't know what a telephone was or what a radio was and they seemed very ignorant and primitive in their ways. They didn't understand how the police happened to stop us at the tunnel entrance, and they called them 'long-knives.' Hearing them say that reminded me of those Indian pictures you see in the movies. It was as if they had stepped right out of the past somehow." He squeezed his eyes shut and continued speaking, only now in an anguished tone. "They killed those police officers——"

"You saw them?" Eric said.

"Yes. It was horrible. Like killing was a way of life to them—a natural thing like you or I might squash so many bugs that annoyed us."

Before Julie could ask him another question, the door behind them opened and the army officers entered. The captain walked over to Eric and drew him aside. "I'll have to ask you both to leave now. This is going to get messy. We have reason to believe that the witness is one of *them*—or a collaborator who's trying to throw us off the trail by telling us all sorts of ridiculous wild stories and all like that. I suppose you heard some of it, too?"

"I think the man's sincere and he's telling the truth."

"We doubt that. The story's too illogical—too far-fetched to have any truth to it. His effort to explain away the invaders' use of missiles by telling us they had bows and arrows and they actually shot the flag atop the Capitol building with a flaming arrow is just a cleverly contrived, carefully rehearsed effort to cover things up until the invaders have infiltrated into every——"

"Captain!" Julie said, stepping forward after having overheard portions of what he was telling Eric, "I think you ought to give that witness the benefit of the doubt and pay attention to what he has to say."

The captain was furious. He glared at Julie and said, "Young lady, I don't care who you are or even if the Secretary sent you under his orders to conduct an investigation for the board of inquiry—you're not coming in here and telling me how to conduct my business. Get out —both of you."

Eric stared at him a moment and said, "Captain, may I remind you that I am chief of the Office of Federal Security and my authority supersedes your own——"

"Listen, mister," the Captain said with vehemence. "In case you didn't know, I'm answerable only to my superiors who are answerable only to the provost marshal and I'm under orders to get the truth out of this witness or any others we may interrogate here. I'm not operating under your authority. If I am, then you will just have to take that up with my superior officers who will inform you that this is a military post and that martial law has been invoked here which means that all civilians—all of you—come under *our* authority. Now, as commanding officer and ranking duty officer here, I am officially ordering both of you off this post. Should I find you here within five minutes after I've injected this witness with truth serum so I can finish this interrogation and perhaps get the real truth out of him, I'll order your arrests!"

"You're not going to inject that man!" Eric cried. "He isn't a suspect. He isn't a suspect for anything. You've no right to do such a thing."

"I beg your pardon," the captain said, "but I have every right—even if I wish to shoot him on the spot. Martial law has been invoked and all civil rights are revoked during the crisis."

Eric and Julie were escorted outside by two armed guards who hastened to carry out the captain's orders. They did not have a chance to reply and when Eric looked at Julie when they were left just inside the entrance to the war room, he said, "How can I ever ask you to forgive me?"

Julie was surprised. She blinked and looked up at him. "What are you talking about?"

"This whole sordid stupid thing," he said with a sweeping gesture of his arms. "I didn't really buy your theory until that truck driver told us his story and described the Indians." His voice broke and he looked away, shaking his head from side to side in self-disgust. When he finally regained his composure, he said, "Not until that witness told us the names of the Indians who had kidnaped him and hijacked the truck did I realize there really was something to all this and that you were right and the whole darned military complex in this country is wrong."

Julie was too delighted to hear this to bother with putting him down again or reminding him of his obstinacy. "What did the Indians' names have to do with changing your mind?"

Eric began to walk with her toward the war room. They entered and he went to his desk where he began to gather up the papers and notes which he pushed into a briefcase.

"Well? I'm waiting," she said.

Eric removed one of the papers from a folder he was pushing into his briefcase and handed it to her. He said, "This will answer the question for me. I decided to do some more checking of your theory. One of the birch bark scrolls contained a list of all the warriors and the tribes which had sent them. At the head of the list were the names of Running Deer and War Pony. You didn't know that because you *couldn't* have known it. I sent several of my men to the mound to see if they could find anything else to lend credence or to disprove your theory and they found the scroll in a moldy buckskin pouch along with other papers—the treaties which President Andrew Jackson broke when he had Congress begin the removal of all the Indians from their sacred lands to the reservations back in 1830. And what's more, I had the people at the Smithsonian and other Indian experts analyze the find and they concurred that fourteen Indians had indeed been buried alive to sleep the 'long sleep' and to be awakened at a specific time when the shaman guarding them was ready to send them forth to organize all the Indian nations into one massive army to overthrow the people of this country. They also explained that they had heard the legends of the sleeping dead warriors who were to come back to life—but no one could say how it was done."

"Eric," Julie cried, throwing her arms around his neck and hugging him out of sheer joy. "You know what would be the most marvelous thing we could possibly do? We could go out there in Central Park, find Running Deer and the other braves, and perhaps make them understand that things are different now and they don't have to start a war against the white man. Perhaps if we get to them first before the Army does, we might learn many things from them which would provide the scientific world some answers to many puzzling questions we've been unable to answer. Do you realize how many things we might be able to learn from these men who lived and were buried alive over a hundred and forty years ago?"

"How're we going to get to them before the Army does?"

"You can call the Secretary. He will order the provost marshal and the army commander-in-chief to let you through." She smiled. "To let us both through."

"I'll do it—but it's too dangerous for you to go along."

"Nonsense. They won't attack us. They're too honorable for that—especially if we come to them under a flag of truce."

"Well," he thought a moment, "maybe it might work. Okay, we'll do it." He picked up the phone and placed a call to the Secretary.

While waiting for the connection, Eric grinned at her.

"What's so amusing?"

"I just thought of something. You know *why* they ended up here in New York rather than out at the Midwestern reservations?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"They heard about the United Nations and thought that had something to do with their Indian peoples—so they headed here instead of to the reservations. Which also explains why they must've come directly to Central Park. They thought the Indian village was here in the woods of the park which they saw from the top of the Empire State Building."

"But why did they blow up the Lincoln Tunnel?" Julie asked him.

"My guess is they were being chased and it happened by accident. They were doing only that which they would've done in the year 1830." Just then the connection with the Secretary was completed and Eric, speaking in a guarded tone over the scrambler, brought him up-to-date. Then he requested permission for Julie and himself to enter the park.

When he hung up there was a broad smile on his face. "We've got it made, Julie. He's asking the President to order the troops to stay outside the park while we go in under a flag of truce. We have carte blanche to do whatever we deem necessary to bring this thing to an end."

A courier arrived and snapped to attention, saluting Eric smartly. "Sir! Your aide has arrived from Atlanta. He's outside in a limousine waiting for you."

Eric and Julie ran out, holding hands. They entered the car and found room amid the buffalo skins Eric's assistant had delivered.

"Where now?" the aide asked.

Eric grinned and gave him the briefcase filled with reports. "Take this back to the war room and tell the brass hats there not to worry—that soon everything will be under control. We're going in under a flag of truce."

"Going where?"

"Into Central Park where the invaders are hiding."

"But there must be thousands of them—" the man gasped. "According to the papers and news bulletins, a full-scale war is about to break out at any moment."

"That's poppycock," Julie said, snuggling her head close to Eric's shoulder.

"Just go in and do as I said," Eric told the man.

The aide left the car a little hesitatingly. He paused on the sidewalk, looked inside at Eric and said, "Be careful and good luck." Then he closed the door and Eric told the driver, "Central Park, but stop at the nearest supermarket first."

"Supermarket?" Julie said. "What on earth for?"

"About that pure spring water—remember? Well, the only place you can get that today is in bottles."

She laughed. She was still laughing when they rolled to a stop later in front of the mobile command post the army provost marshal had set up at Fifth Avenue and the entrance to Central Park.

Eight

Running Deer stepped out of the bushes where he and the other braves had been concealed and boldly folded his arms across his chest to watch the pale-faced man and woman approach. When Running Deer had learned that the couple had entered the park through the cordon of troops and armored vehicles, he left their encampment at once to see what they were going to do. This was the first time they had been cornered since the time they had left the kiva beneath the mound and just when he had begun to think they were destined never to have the pow-wow with their red brothers, the palefaces were surrendering to him and his braves. Why else would they step forward with the white flag of truce? And why else would a man and a woman be approaching unless those two were the great white chief and his squaw from Washington whose flag he had burned?

Upon seeing the heavy buffalo pelts the white man was carrying, Running Deer called Sharp Tomahawk who was concealed in the bushes.

When Sharp Tomahawk saw the pelts, he cried out to the other braves, "My brothers! We are victorious. The white men are surrendering to us. Now perhaps we shall learn what happened to the Indian nations who are supposed to be on this island."

Eric and Julie stopped about a dozen paces from the

Indian braves. Eric dropped the pelts to the grass and held up his hand and said, "Peace."

Julie, holding a white handkerchief which had been tied to the end of a stick, smiled. "We come in peace, red brothers." Then she paused and looked at Running Deer. "Are you the chief?"

"Yes, I am Running Deer."

"Where are the other braves?" Julie asked.

Running Deer turned and motioned toward the trees. Cold Wind and Blazing Arrow stepped out and made themselves visible. Then War Pony and Gray Eagle moved into the clearing and stood beside the other four.

"This is all of you?" Eric asked.

"Yes. Except for Standing Wolf and five of his braves, who are not yet here, we are all there is. We have come here to palaver with our red brothers."

"We know that," Eric said. "But your red brothers have made permanent peace with the white man."

"That is correct," Julie said. "The red man and the white man are no longer at war."

Eric knelt beside the buffalo hides. "We bring you these robes of buffalo to show you we respect you and will not make war on you."

"We have made war on you and we are sworn to continue doing so," Running Deer said. "We have taken many paleface scalps." At this, he untied the string of scalps dangling from his belt and held them up. Then he hurled them aside and walked toward the buffalo pelts. The other Indians followed. He turned and motioned for them to pick up the pelts. Gray Eagle and War Pony knelt and picked up the hides and then carried them to the trees. Running Deer beckoned for Eric and Julie to follow. When they had reached the cover of the trees where they could not be seen from the streets, Running Deer produced a peace pipe from his pouch and lit it with a cigarette lighter. He puffed several times and then motioned for the braves and the white couple to sit with him in a circle. They did so. Julie sat beside Running Deer. She accepted the peace pipe and puffed it. Then she passed it on to Eric, who puffed deeply and then passed it to Sharp Tomahawk who was seated beside him.

"We wish only to speak to you, to speak about your days as a youth, when this land many, many moons ago belonged to your people," Julie said. "We will promise you amnesty—that you will not be harmed by those soldiers out there who have been stopped from killing you."

"We cannot die until we have performed our mission," Running Deer said.

"You have no mission," Eric said. "A hundred and forty years have passed and many things have changed."

"We have seen that. But still we wish to see and speak to the children of our children's children and hear with our own ears what they have to say."

"Very well," Eric said. "But first, we have brought your buffalo robes. Put them on."

"We will put them on," Running Deer said, standing now and taking the robe at the top of the pile and throwing it over his shoulders. He sat down again and motioned for the other braves to don the robes, too. When each brave had returned to the circle and sat down again cross-legged with the buffalo robe across his shoulders, one robe remained in the center.

Eric looked at it and then said, "I would like to wear the robe, too. Here is a gift for you for that robe." He reached into a paper sack he had been carrying and removed a six-pack of spring water. Then he opened the bottles. He stood up and held a bottle out for Running Deer, tipping it slightly so a few drops spilled onto his forehead. Running Deer took the bottle and drank from it. Eric went to Gray Eagle and gave him a bottle after sprinkling a few drops from it onto his face. Then he proceeded around the circle until each Indian had a bottle and had been sprinkled with a few drops of water.

When this was done he went to the center of the circle and picked up the seventh buffalo robe and donned it. Suddenly, Eric began to feel very weak. He sank down beside Julie and looked at her, a strange expression in his eyes.

Running Deer, seated beside Julie, spoke: "We have reached the end of the trail and cannot travel further——"

Julie turned and looked at Eric. She gasped at what she saw. His face was ashen and withering before her eyes. Suddenly, he slumped forward and rolled over. She wept, unable to understand what had happened to him so suddenly. He whispered, his voice now hardly discernible: "I went to the kiva, Julie. While I was there, Father Chitimacha and the two braves came in and caught me. They held me prisoner for a long while and I told them of all the things that had taken place in the world. Father Chitimacha, seeing through the eyes of the two wounded braves, decided I was telling the truth and he gave me back my life if I gave my word to deliver the robes to Running Deer and the others so they would forever return to the Happy Hunting Ground in the sky. I gave my word. But I, too, had to go with—with them."

He sagged and went limp and Julie jumped up, screaming at the top of her lungs. Eric had wasted away before her eyes. What had been the man she loved only moments before was now a skeleton!

She staggered around and saw six more skeletons on the ground in a semi-circle around them. Each skeleton was partially covered by a buffalo robe.

As she continued to shriek and scream at the top of her lungs, the troops closed in, bayonets drawn.

When they found Julie, babbling incoherently, looking in horror at the buffalo hide-covered skeletons, they carried her away and a medic injected morphine into her arm.

Hours later peace had returned to the country. Headlines and television broadcasters announced the news that the crisis was over; that the forces of the most powerful nation on earth had defeated the enemy and driven them forever from the sacred soil of America.

However, now that the national emergency was over, it was decided that in the best interests of the people, the titular office of the President of the United States be abolished and the responsibility for the governing of the people would remain in the hands of the military leadership. After all, had the military not been responsible for protecting the people and saving the country from falling into the hands of the alien invaders, and had they not done their job so well, there wouldn't have been any country left to govern.

When Julie Chambers awakened days later she found herself on the ground beside a burning torch. She sat up and realized she had somehow been returned to the kiva in the bowels of the burial mound. Then she saw the figure of an ancient medicine man huddled in a corner. He heard her stirring and said, "It is good that you are well again, squaw of the paleface."

"What am I doing here?" she asked.

"Awaiting the day when the red man will rise up and overthrow the white man—but that may not be too long. For even now the white man is destroying himself."

"He is——?" she said.

"Ah, yes. He pollutes the air so that soon he will no longer be able to breathe and he pollutes the rivers so that soon he will no longer be able to drink and there will no longer be fish in the sea or animals to hunt on the land and then we will inherit the land that is rightfully ours once again. Now you will lie down in that mound and sleep the long sleep, squaw woman. The magic seed will awaken you when there is a better world to awaken into."

Julie did as she was asked. She lowered herself into one of the mounds and then said, "One last question, Father Chitimacha?"

"Yes, my child?"

"Who brought me back here to the kiva? How did I get here?"

"He who brought the bones of the seven who lay under the buffalo robes."

"The *seven?*"

"Yes. Seven."

Julie Chambers closed her eyes. Even as she felt the earth covering her body and the sleep claiming her brain, she grew aware of Eric's nearness to her and she began to dream the endless dream.

It would come to pass again. Father Chitimacha will sprinkle the magic seeds and they will spring up from the ground once again like the warriors of Cadmus. But that would be a very long time.

8-73

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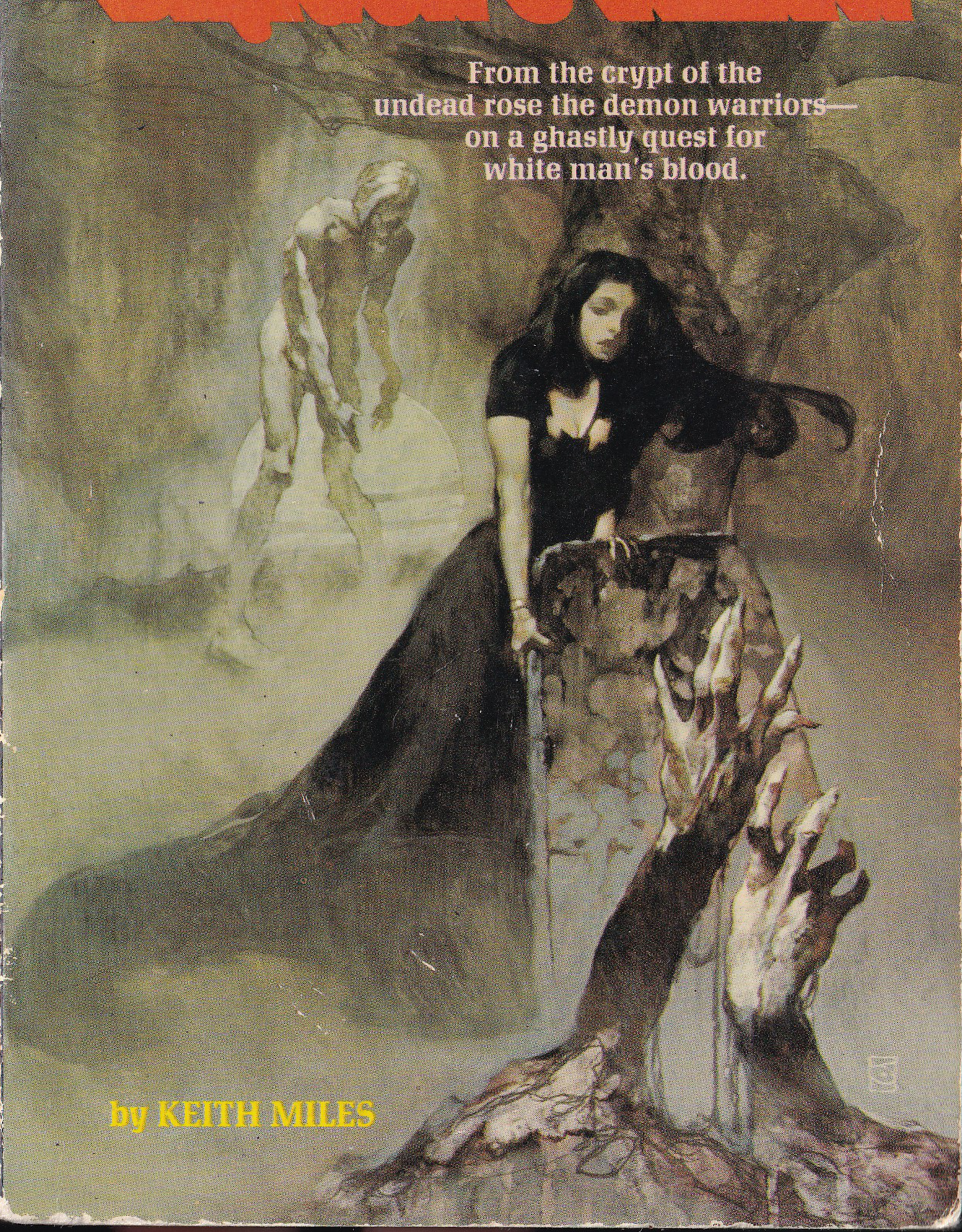

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